Writer's Helper

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C O N D U I T

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1. Introduction

Writer's Helper is a collection of programs to help writers find and creatively organize ideas, put those ideas in writing, and evaluate what they have written. The programs are arranged into two major sections:

Find and Organize a Subject offers several ways to help choose and explore a writing topic and then organize the information for preparing to write.

Evaluate a Writing Project analyzes several characteristics of a writing project to help locate certain grammatical errors and improve writing style.

Figure 1 lists the individual programs in each section.

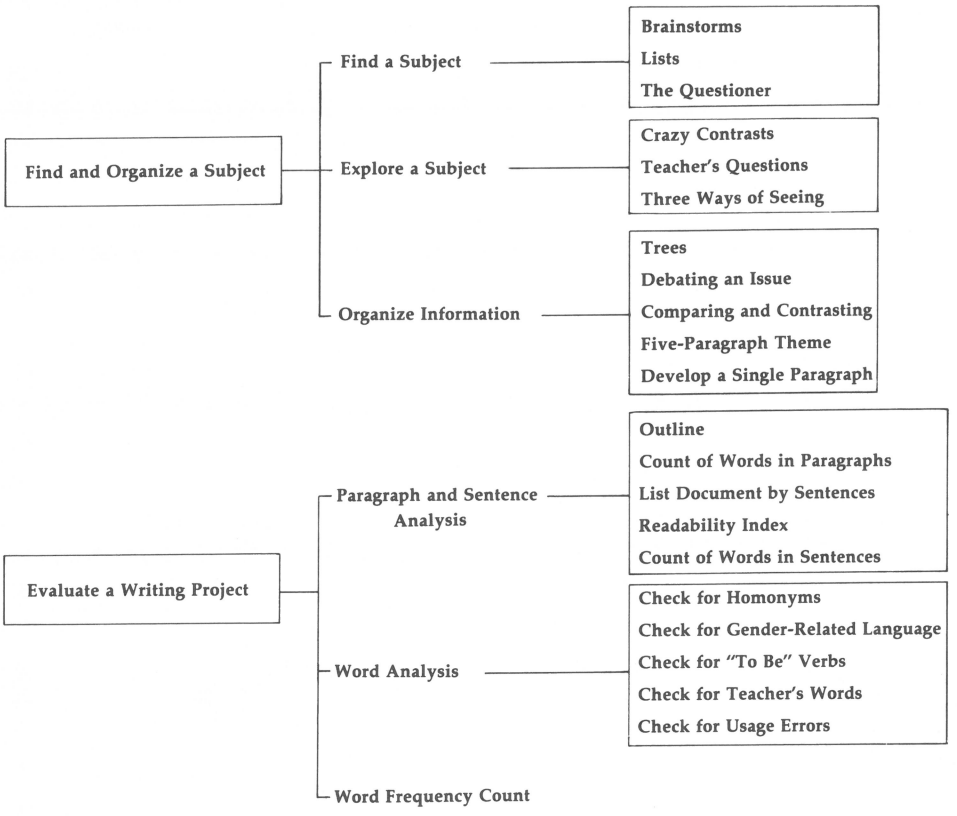


Figure 1. Writer's Helper Programs.

Students will probably not use every program for every writing project—that would take many hours. Instead, they might start by using one program to find an interesting subject and another program to explore that subject.

At the end of each program, students can save what they have written and then use it as a starting point for writing in a word processor. *Writer's Helper* can be used with word processors that use standard Applesoft text files and with Bank Street Writer.

Bank Street Writer℠ is a registered trademark of Bank Street College of Education.

Once students have written a first draft, they can use the evaluation programs to check, for example, sentence style or to locate homonym errors. They can then return to the word processor to correct mistakes or use a *Writer's Helper* program to reorganize ideas or develop a weak paragraph. Students have complete control over which programs to use and when to use them.

The Programs

Following are brief descriptions of each program in *Writer's Helper.* (See Chapters 3 and 4 for complete descriptions of each group of programs.)

Find and Organize a Subject

Find a Subject

Brainstorms (5 minutes) is a free-writing activity to help select a subject. Students can also use the program as a sketchpad to develop preliminary ideas or develop a paragraph.

Lists (5 minutes) helps create lists of possible subjects for a writing project.

The Questioner (10 minutes) poses questions to help select a subject.

Explore a Subject

Crazy Contrasts (5 minutes) spurs creative thinking by comparing a writing topic to another, unusual subject.

Teacher's Questions (10 minutes) poses a set of questions supplied by the teacher for a specific writing assignment.

Three Ways of Seeing (15 minutes) helps look at a writing topic in isolation, as a process of change, and in relation to other subjects.

Organize Information

Trees (20 minutes) shows how to group thoughts about a subject into categories and how these categories form a tree outline.

Debating an Issue (10 minutes) solicits information on both sides of an issue and then shows how to organize this information for writing.

Comparing and Contrasting (10 minutes) helps create an outline of similarities and differences between two subjects.

Five-Paragraph Theme (25 minutes) asks questions about a subject and then writes a rough draft of a five-paragraph theme.

Develop a Single Paragraph (10 minutes) guides in developing descriptive or argumentative paragraphs.

Note: The number in parentheses following each program name is the average amount of time needed to complete the program.

Evaluate a Writing Project

Paragraph/Sentence Analysis

Outline Document (3 minutes) prints the first sentence of each paragraph to help check for transition words and logical sequence.

Count of Words in Paragraphs (3 minutes) counts and graphs the number of words in each paragraph.

List Document by Sentences (5 minutes) prints each sentence in the document, one at a time.

Readability Level (3 minutes) checks the readability level (using the Fogg Index) against an audience level you supply.

Count of Words in Sentences (3 minutes) counts and graphs the number of words in each sentence to help judge sentence style.

Word Analysis

Each of the following programs gives a short example of how to use correctly any word it finds. Students are given the choice of marking the word so that, at the end of the program, they can save the marked file and then use a word processor to search and replace the marked words.

Check for Homonyms (5 minutes) searches for commonly misused homonyms.

Check for Gender-Related Language (5 minutes) finds gender biased words.

Check for Teacher's Words (5 minutes) looks for words supplied by the teacher.

Check for "To Be" Verbs (5 minutes) checks for these forms of "to be": was, is, been, were, am, are, be.

Check for Usage Errors (5 minutes) checks for common mistakes in word usage.

Word Frequency Count (5 minutes) displays a frequency count for each word in the document. Students may exclude up to 20 words of their choice from the count.

2. Getting Started

Before reading this section, please review the instructions on the IMPORTANT INFORMATION *sheet included with the package. This sheet gives specific information about the particular version of* Writer's Helper *you are using.*

To begin using the programs, start your computer with the *Writer's Helper* PROGRAM disk. Following the initial title page, the menu in Figure 2 appears.

Writer's Helper

Writer's Helper is designed to help you find and creatively organize ideas, put those ideas in writing, and evaluate what you have written.

Which section of Writer's Helper would you like to use?

1) Find and Organize a Subject

2) Evaluate a Writing Project

3) Change to a Word Processor

4) Acknowledgements

5) End this Session

6) Management Utilities

Type the number of your choice and press RETURN.

Figure 2. Writer's Helper Menu.

Option 1 from this menu, Find and Organize a Subject, consists of 11 programs to help start and organize a writing project.

Option 2, Evaluate a Writing Project, consists of 11 programs which analyze writing for organization and style.

Option 3 lets you change to your word processor. Option 4 lists acknowledgements for the program, and option 5 ends the session.

Option 6, Management Utilities, gives you several options to set up the disk. See the section "Management Utilities" below for an explanation of these options.

Using the Programs

The best way, of course, to learn how to use these programs is to try one. You may use any of the programs in any sequence, but for the Evaluation programs you will first need a document created in a word processor. A sample file, called DEMO, is included on the WORK disk so you can try out the evaluation programs immediately. (If you will be using Bank Street Writer on the Apple, use the file named DEMO.BSW.)

To select a group of programs, type the number of your choice from the *Writer's Helper* Menu. Before moving to your choice, the program will ask which type of word processor you will be using. (See the section "Management Utilities" below for a way to specify the word processor permanently and avoid this question each time you use a program.)

The program will then present the next menu which lists several categories of options, for example, programs to help Find a Subject. From this second menu, you must choose the specific category of interest which will take you to the actual programs. From this point, simply follow the instructions on the screen. You can easily switch back and forth among menus by pressing the ESC key.

It is not expected that all students will use all levels, but will proceed to whichever level matches their needs. Nor must students use each program at a given level. The multiple programs at each level allow students to select the approach that matches their interest and style. One program on one level will be sufficient to get students started if they find it interesting and thought-provoking. If students get off to a bad start in a program or it isn't going the way they expected, they can always press the ESC key to return to the menu where they can start the program over or select a different program.

Find and Organize a Subject

This section of Writer's Helper will help you prepare to write. You select the kind of help you want.

At the end of each exercise, you can save a copy of what you have written on your WORK disk. You can then use your writing in a word processor as a starting point for your first draft.

You can also immediately print a copy of your writing, if a printer is attached to your computer.

1) Find a Subject
2) Explore a Subject
3) Organize Information about a Subject
4) Develop a Single Paragraph
5) Return to the Writer's Helper Menu
6) End this Session

Type the number of your choice and press RETURN.

Figure 3. Find and Organize a Subject Menu.

Evaluate a Writing Project

These programs will give you information about your document so you can begin the revision process. The programs can only tell you some things about your writing, such as the grade level of your writing or whether you are using many passive verbs. The programs can't tell you if your writing is grammatically correct, or if it is interesting or persuasive.

Choose the kind of analysis you want from the following list:

1) Paragraph/Sentence Analysis

2) Word Analysis

3) Word Frequency Count

4) Return to the Writer's Helper Menu

5) End this Session

Type the number of your choice and press RETURN.

Figure 4. Evaluate a Writing Project Menu.

Save and Print Menu

At the conclusion of each program (or if you press ESC and have typed more than one line), the program will ask if you want to save or print your work.

This menu gives two ways to save your work so that you can use it in a word processor as a starting point for writing or refer to it later as you are writing or revising.

Option 1 saves a copy of your work on the disk. The program will prompt you to insert your WORK disk; you cannot save files to the *Writer's Helper* PROGRAM disk. The program will save the file in the format for the word processor you selected earlier. (See the section "Management Utilities" below for a way to specify the file format permanently.)

Option 2 prints a copy of your work, if a printer is attached to your computer. (For the Apple, the program assumes the printer is located in slot #1 of your computer. To change the slot number, refer to the "Management Utilities" section below. If you're unsure of what this number should be, check with a local computer expert.)

Option 3 lets you list the contents of the WORK disk and remove files.

Option 4 returns you to the previous menu, for example, Find a Subject.

Management Utilities

This option from the *Writer's Helper* menu gives you several options to set up how you will interact with the programs. It also includes two programs you can use to create special lists of questions and words for your students.

Option 1, Work on Word List

This program allows you to enter up to 25 words or phrases for the program to check in students' writing. For a complete description, see the section "Teacher's Words" in Chapter 4.

Option 2, Work on Questions

This program allows you to enter up to 20 questions to ask your students' about their writing project. For a complete description, see the section "Teacher's Questions" in Chapter 3.

Option 3, Hide (or Show) the Management Utilities option

This option allows you to remove the Management Utilities option from the *Writer's Helper* menu if you prefer students not use these utilities. If the Management Utilities option is not listed on the Writer's Helper menu, you can still return to the utilities by pressing ESC.

Option 4, Modify Password Protection

This option allows you to enter a password for the Management Utilities option to further prevent students from using these options. If you hide the Management Utilities and also add a password, then when you press ESC to see the Management Utilities, the program will ask you for this password.

Option 5, Specify the Printer Slot (Apple version only)

The default printer slot is 1. Use this option to change the slot number, if necessary.

Option 6, Specify the Number of Drives

Use this option to tell *Writer's Helper* that your computer has two disk drives. The programs will then automatically save your work to the WORK disk in the second drive.

Option 7, Specify Type of Word Processor

Option 7 is not included in Apple ProDos version which works with ProDos-based word processors.

Use this option to permanently specify the type of word processor you will be using. The programs will then not ask each time and save you a step while using the programs.

However, if students will be using several types of word processors, you should choose the option to let students choose the type of word processor.

3. Find and Organize a Subject

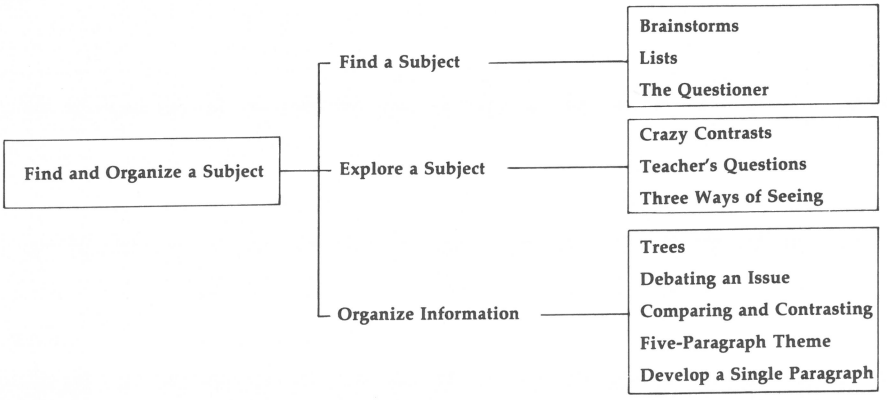


Figure 5. Chart of Programs in Find and Organize a Subject.

Students often have difficulty completing writing assignments because they leap into a subject without considering alternative topics, purpose, audience, or their ability to say more than a few words about the subject. To overcome this tendency, educators have devised a variety of prewriting activities. The programs in this section of *Writer's Helper* are based on some of these activities that teachers have found most successful.

Some of the activities are traditional, emphasizing such standard approaches as finding topic sentences, searching for support, and developing writing according to various rhetorical modes. Other activities are more open-ended and contemporary, emphasizing heuristics. Since there are eleven activities with a range of purposes, you should be able to find some activities that best match your students and are most in tune with your writing curriculum.

Brainstorms

Elbow, Peter. 1973. Writing without teachers. New York: Oxford University Press.

Brainstorms is a free-writing activity intended to help students find a subject and record initial thoughts about that subject. The program is based on the work of Peter Elbow who felt that the best way to find something to write about is to write.

Free-writing works on the principle that we have many ideas if we could just free ourselves enough to express them. Elbow had his students write quickly and continually for five or ten minutes. They were not to look back or to stop writing during the allotted time. Unfortunately, it is difficult to keep students from looking back or from correcting misspellings and punctuation errors. And, of course, as soon as students stop, they lose their train of thought and a chance to discover new ideas.

Brainstorms encourages students to write as quickly as they can without going back or stopping. During the exercise, students cannot use the arrow keys to back up and make corrections. The program also measures students' typing speed based on the first ten keystrokes and prints a period on the screen if they stop longer than their normal time between letters. Because each student's typing speed is measured, slower typists are allowed more time between letters and thus are not penalized. Since the program does not allow students to go back and prods them every time they hesitate, students should develop the flow of ideas that Elbow originally intended.

To begin, students first indicate how many lines they would like for free-writing (between 3 and 10). For slow typists, three lines may be enough. For better typists, eight to ten lines may be more helpul in discovering new ideas.

After students have typed the specified number of lines, the program asks them to identify which idea surprises them and which one interests them. These ideas can then serve as topic ideas or as the beginning of more free-writing.

One way to introduce this program to students is to use it in class. You might begin with a sentence or two and then have the students suggest words or phrases to add.

Students can also use the program independently as a scratchpad before writing a first draft or individual paragraphs.

Lists

One common problem is that students often choose an inappropriate subject for their writing project: they don't understand the topic sufficiently or lose interest in the topic. Unfortunately, once students have even a few sentences on paper, they are reluctant to change topics and lose their investment.

One way to prevent this premature closure on a topic is to begin a writing assignment by making a list of words or phrases and then choose one or two items from the list that look promising. Since students write only a word or phrase, they have no great investment in one particular topic and so are free to explore other possibilities. Usually, the first few topics in the list are the old standbys—sports, school—but often by the end of the list, students are coming up with ideas which they would not otherwise have considered.

Lists automates this listing process by asking for one phrase after another for a total of ten. While students will often use *Lists* before they start a writing assignment, they can also use it later in the process. For example, after students have chosen a topic, they can use the program to list information about their subject. (The program *Trees*, described below, shows how to organize such a list.)

If the topic is controversial, students could list information supporting their point of view and then a second list of information opposing it. If the subject is a process, they could list in sequence the parts of the process.

Students can save the lists and print them to turn in to you. To prevent students from overusing generalizations, you might restrict them from writing their essays until they turn in a list of fifteen details about their subject. Once students have your approval, they can then use a word processor to modify the items in the lists and incorporate them in an essay.

The Questioner

Another approach to selecting a topic is to ask questions to help narrow the choices. *The Questioner* poses these questions:

Who is the strangest person you know?
What is your favorite day of the week?
What career do you most admire?
What country would you most like to visit?
In what year would you like to be living?
Do you think sports should be part of school activities?
Why do some people have more friends than others?
What would you do if you were president for a day?
How much money does it take to live a good life?
What is it parents should know more about?
Do you think the grading system in schools should be changed?
Is a college degree necessary to be successful in life?
Are "health foods" a fad?
What is your most important concern for the future of America?
What do you think could be done to feed the world's hungry people?
Why must we develop space travel?
How do you think the family as a unit will change in the next 50 years?
What is your favorite television commercial?
How has television changed our political processes?
Why do some people believe in astrology?

The program presents each question and waits for the student's answer. If a certain question is uninteresting, the student can skip to the next question. After completing the first ten questions, students can choose to see ten more. The program saves both the questions and answers, so students can use these as a starting point for their writing project in a word processor or hand in printed copies to you.

When you review students' answers, you can judge by length and originality which question seems to be steering the student in a fruitful direction. You might have the student make a list of additional information about a question that looks promising.

Crazy Contrasts

In an effort to get students to produce work that is correct, we often settle for work that is uncreative. One way to spur creativity in both essay and fiction writing is to compare a known subject to something totally removed from that subject. We could compare cross country skiing to day-old meat loaf or computers to subway tunnels. Comparisons of this type force us to bridge normally unrelated subjects, and in the process, we may find that more of a bridge exists than we might have imagined. (Isn't cross country skiing pretty dull? Don't some people find computers forbidding?)

Crazy Contrasts automates this kind of original comparison by taking a subject of the student's choice and generating another, normally unrelated subject for comparison. Students can compare their subjects to the following randomly chosen contrasts:

an old shoe
a new baby
an iceberg
a plotted plant
a subway
designer bluejeans
a day-old meat loaf
a flat tire
a ski lift
an abandoned building
Donald Duck
a teddy bear
an old calendar
a movie star
cracks in a sidewalk

While students can use *Crazy Contrasts* individually, you may also want to use it in class to generate ideas before assigning a topic, to stimulate creative writing, or in character analysis after students have read a short story. Comparing several of the major characters to a subway or designer bluejeans may help your students find and discuss aspects of the personalities which would otherwise go unnoticed.

Teacher's Questions

Experienced teachers always have points they would like to stress about a subject. *Teacher's Questions* allows you to create a list of questions that the program then asks of students.

To create your list of questions, follow this procedure:

1) Place the *Writer's Helper* PROGRAM disk in Drive 1 and start the computer.
2) From the main menu, select option 6, Management Utilities. (If you have previously removed the Management Utilities option from this menu as explained in Chapter 2, press ESC to get to the Management Utilities menu.)
3) From the Management Utilities menu, select option 2, Work on Questions. From the subsequent menu, you can then choose options to create new questions, add to an existing set of questions, or edit and examine an existing set of questions. After you choose one of these options, follow the instructions on the screen to enter or edit questions.
4) Each question can be no longer than one line, for up to 20 questions.
5) When you indicate you are finished typing questions, the program will ask if you want to save the list.

One way to use *Teacher's Questions* is to have students use the program before they begin to write. From the questions and answers they turn in to you for evaluation, you can judge if they are ready to begin writing.

You can also use the program to create a list of review questions following a reading assignment. Students' answers can then be a test of their comprehension, as well as a starting point in a word processor for a writing project.

Three Ways of Seeing

One recent approach to organizing thoughts about a subject was invented by Becker, Pike, and Young at the University of Michigan. They invented a matrix of nine approaches to a subject. While looking at all nine areas is time-consuming, a reasonable approximation is to look at a subject in isolation, as a process of change, and as one item within a network of related items. *Three Ways of Seeing* automates this approach.

Young, Richard E., Alton L. Becker, and Kenneth L. Pike. 1970. Rhetoric: discovery and change. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

When students use the program, they first name their subject. Next, they choose which of the following labels best fits their subject:

person	event
place	idea
thing	activity

The program then asks a series of twelve to fifteen questions geared toward the chosen category. The questions are presented in three groups—isolation questions, process questions, and network questions. Each group is labeled.

Here is a typical series of questions students would see in this program. (The program inserts the student's subject at the end of each question.)

What would be a good brief description of
What is the dominant characteristic of
How would you best describe the importance of
What makes people most attracted to
What is least attractive about
What has changed about the appearance of
What has changed about the importance of
Are people more or less attracted to
In the future what might people become most attracted to about
What used to be least attractive to people about
Why has there been this change in the attractiveness of
How could you compare your subject's appearance to similar
In what ways may your subject's appearance be better than similar
In what ways may you subject's appearance be worse than other
How is your subject more important than other
How is your subject less important than similar
What about your subject is better than similar
What about your subject is worse than other

You may want students to turn in their printed answers or to use them as the basis for class discussion. Their answers should lead students to new insights about their subjects and help them find productive focuses for additional writing.

This program could also be used as a class activity after reading a short story. You could analyze characters in the story by using them as the initial subject of the program. For example, you could use class discussion to answer questions like "What makes people most attracted to MacBeth?" Use the program a second time to generate questions about the setting of the story, or one event, or the theme. You could use the program in this same way to discuss the biography of a famous person, an event in history, or a current event.

Trees

After students have explored a subject, they can often collect a fair amount of information about it, but may have trouble organizing the information. The function of *Trees* is to help students cluster the information they have assembled into subheadings. The program then prints a tree outline showing their clustering of the information.

When students begin the program, it asks them for the name of their subject and eight to fifteen items somehow related to the subject. The program then gives an example of how to cluster items and asks questions to help students cluster their own ideas. Figure 6 is an example of a tree for "friendship."

Friendship	Being Together	going to movies walking together playing sports
	Trusting	sharing feelings talking confiding
	Helping	doing favors loaning money listening giving a ride confiding
	Dangers	moving changing interests

Figure 6. Tree Outline for Friendship.

The tree should help students in one of two ways. First, it can help them organize information for paragraphs. In the example above, students can see that the information about friendship falls into four basic areas, each of which could form a paragraph containing details about the items in the list.

A second use could be to narrow a broad topic into a more focused topic. In the example above, "Dangers of Friendship" provides a more focused topic, and each of the two items under it could be developed into a paragraph. Since vague topics are often a problem for students, you might routinely have students explore whether one of the subheadings of their tree has possibilities as a writing topic.

If you are using an assigned topic, it might be helpful to create a tree for the topic in class. Ask for items related to the given subject and then choose categories through class discussion. You might then post the tree, so students can refer to it while writing. Better yet, generate several trees for the same subject by adding different items to the list and by placing the same items in different categories.

Using the tree as a reference, students can then use the paragraph programs (described below) to develop the original tree skeleton. They could also use the *Lists* or *Brainstorms* programs to generate material for the paragraphs. Other students may want to use the tree in a word processor directly and begin writing after each subheading.

Besides helping students organize their ideas for writing, *Trees* can also be used as a class activity after a reading assignment. You might begin by listing items related to a specific character and then see how those ideas can be put into categories such as strengths and weaknesses. You could also look at the story's plot by listing elements of the plot, and then try to fit these elements into categories—developed character X, supported theme Y, and so on.

In a simpler approach, students could type in spelling words and then categorize them according to spelling rules or similarity of definition.

Trees can also be used as a way to gather information before writing poetry. Students could start with a subject and list images. They could then group the items and use them as images for single lines or themes for stanzas.

Debating an Issue

When students begin writing about controversial issues, they often make one of two mistakes. Some will be so intent on proving their opinion that they ignore any other point of view. The result is one-sided arguments which are weak and ineffective.

Another typical mistake is that students start with one opinion, develop it for several paragraphs, and then seem to change their minds entirely. The last two paragraphs take on a whole different view and leave the reader baffled as to the writer's real opinion. What has often happened is that the student began with one opinion, but in the course of writing, changed his or her mind. Rather than change the first page or two, the student turns in a theme which is a marvel of doubletalk.

Debating an Issue is designed to help students avoid these two problems by having them list all they know about *both* sides of an argument. Thus, they must think about opposing opinions as well as their own opinions.

The program begins by asking the student to state an opinion. Next, the student lists reasons which support his opinion and then reasons which might prove his opinion wrong.

If the student lists more reasons against the opinion than for it, the program asks if he wants to change his opinion. If he lists more reasons for than against the opinion, the program warns him that his arguments may seem one-sided.

The program next shows all of the student's reasons in favor of the opinion and asks the student to indicate the best three reasons. The student repeats this process for the reasons against, and the program then generates an outline of these reasons for and against the opinion.

Besides helping students arrive at their real opinions and see alternative ideas, the list produced by this program can be used as an outline for writing. Students could transfer the list to a word processor and use it as the basis of a six-paragraph theme with each reason being the topic sentence of a paragraph. They then add detail or other forms of support for each of the six sentences and add an introduction.

Generating a theme in this manner will help students stay on their subject. It will also help slower students by letting them concentrate exclusively on supporting assertions which are already on the screen (in the word processor), easy to see and remember. They aren't faced with the tasks of both finding major points and supporting them, nor do they have to worry about losing track of their main point and wandering off the subject.

The program could also be used as a class activity. Whether the initial discussion point were the theme of a short story or the nature of a literary character, you could have students list points supporting both sides during class discussion. The most involving part of the discussion would follow when students try to reach agreement on the three most persuasive reasons.

One useful modification to the program is to raise the issue of audience. If you were in support of a shorter school day, would your reasons in favor be the same if you were writing to classmates as they would be if you were writing to the school board? Should they be? What kinds of reasons opposing your opinion would you get from each group? Would the three best reasons in favor of your opinion be the same three for each group?

The program could also be used as an aid in reading persuasive essays. Students could identify the point the author is trying to make, list all points the author uses for support and in opposition, and then try to name the most important in each category. Discussion could center on 1) the author's intended audience and possible changes to reach other audiences, 2) additional support or opposition which could be included in the essay, and 3) changing one of the author's minor points to a major point.

Comparing and Contrasting

Teachers often ask students to compare or contrast two subjects to check their knowledge about both subjects and to give them experience in bridging ideas and events. Often, however, students have trouble making comparisons beyond the obvious or changing statements of contrast into essay form. *Comparing and Contrasting* is intended to elicit comparisons and contrasts from students and to show how to structure the information in essay form.

The program begins by asking students to name their subject and then to name a similar subject which might be more familiar to their readers. The program then displays both subjects and asks students to list ways the two subjects are similar and then ways the two subjects are different.

As in *Debating an Issue,* the program presents each completed list and asks students to name the three most important similarities and the three most important differences. These six key points are then displayed in outline form.

While students will probably use this program as a way to write comparison/contrast essays, you could also use it to generate class discussion about a story or to explore a subject. After students have discovered similarities and differences between their subject and other subjects, they may choose to write about a totally different aspect of the original subject and only use the similarities as metaphors.

Speaking of metaphors, you might want to use the program prior to assigning poetry writing. You could give students an initial topic, like "sunset," and a list of possible comparisons, such as "old age," "autumn," "high school graduation," "the end of a play," "the last game of the season." Students would then use the program to make lists of similarities and differences to use in their poems.

Students can also use the program to explore a story. Choose one or two characters from a story and have students compare and contrast them to other characters—other characters in the story or characters from past stories the class has read.

Five-Paragraph Theme

One of the standard approaches to theme organization is the five-paragraph theme. Students start with an introductory paragraph which contains a thesis statement, follow with three paragraphs which prove or describe the thesis, and then close with a one-paragraph conclusion.

This approach to writing is currently criticized because it is considered restrictive and divorced from the kind of writing normally found outside composition classrooms. As an exercise, however, it still offers instructional value. Students must state an idea in one sentence and find three reasons supporting their initial thesis. Students then have to explain each of these three reasons in a paragraph. As an assignment, this approach breaks down into teachable components (thesis sentences, paragraph structure) which can themselves be the focus of additional instruction.

The version of the five-paragraph theme presented in this program is similar in structure to standard approaches. The difference is that the program emphasizes purpose and audience and actually writes the essay for the student.

The program begins by asking students to name a subject and a purpose for writing. Figure 7 is a sample of what students will see on the screen.

```
Your subject: DENTAL FLOSS

What form your essay takes depends on your
purpose. Choose a purpose from the list below:

1) Describe the appearance of DENTAL FLOSS.
2) Compare DENTAL FLOSS to another subject.
3) Show how DENTAL FLOSS has changed over time.
4) Describe the job or function of DENTAL FLOSS.
5) Describe the importance of DENTAL FLOSS.

Type the number of your choice and press RETURN. 5

Okay, we'll organize an essay around the importance
of DENTAL FLOSS.

Let's start by thinking about your audience. Type a
word or phrase naming your audience, then press
RETURN.

DENTAL HYGIENIST

Now let's explore what kinds of opinions you would
expect DENTAL HYGIENISTS to have about
DENTAL FLOSS.
```

Finish this sentence:

My audience believes the importance of DENTAL FLOSS...

IS FORGOTTEN BY TOO MANY PEOPLE.

What do YOU think? Do you agree with your audience? NO

You can explain to your audience why they are wrong. Start by finishing this sentence:

I believe the real importance of DENTAL FLOSS...

IS INFLATED.

Now you can try to convince your audience you are right.

Start by writing three complete sentences which show why THE REAL IMPORTANCE OF DENTAL FLOSS IS INFLATED.

1) FLORIDE IN DRINKING WATER IS ELIMINATING TOOTH DECAY ANYWAY.
2) A WATER PIK DOES A BETTER JOB OF PROTECTING GUMS.
3) MOST PEOPLE ARE LIVING OFF CARROTS AND PRUNE JUICE SO THERE ISN'T BACTERIA AROUND LIKE THERE USED TO BE.

Figure 7. Sample Interaction from Five-Paragraph Theme.

The last three sentences in Figure 7 are the topic sentences in the essay. The program now has the student type four sentences to support or develop each initial sentence. The program then automatically formats the sentences, writes an introduction and a conclusion, and displays a five-paragraph theme. Our example theme might look something like Figure 8.

Most people think that the real importance of dental floss is forgotten by too many people. But that really isn't true. Here are three reasons why the real importance of dental floss is inflated.

One reason why the importance of dental floss is inflated is floride in drinking water is eliminating tooth decay anyway. Just drinking water is helping most kids have fewer cavities than their parents. A recent study showed tooth decay down nearly fifty percent, and we know kids aren't better tooth brushers than they used to be. Kids are kids, and don't brush or floss regularly. Floride makes sure they don't have to.

Another reason why the importance of dental floss is inflated is the water pik does a better job of protecting gums. It massages them gently. It gets to areas dental floss can't. It doesn't cut them like floss can. It can also be done faster.

A final reason why the importance of dental floss is inflated is most people are living off carrots and prune juice so there isn't bacteria around like there used to be. Everyone is on a health kick. People only drink pop in the privacy of their own homes. Most steak houses actually sell more salads than steak.

So there shouldn't be much doubt. Because floride in the drinking water is eliminating tooth decay anyway, and the water pik does a better job of protecting gums, and most people are living off carrot sticks and prune juice so there isn't bacteria around like there used to be, it is clear that the importance of dental floss is inflated.

Figure 8. Completed Five-Paragraph Theme.

The purpose of this program is *not* to do the writing for students. The theme created by the program is very rough and certainly couldn't be submitted in its current form (and it tends to be even rougher the first time students use the program).

What students should gain from the program is, first, a *procedure* for writing. They should see that writing requires a purpose, an awareness of audience, and a great deal of information about a subject. If students neglect to answer any of the questions about purpose or audience or cannot name three supporting statements or four elaborative statements, the program stops and

asks the student to collect the needed information. In actual use, few students will make it all the way through the program the first time because they simply aren't ready to write—they don't know enough about their subject, audience, or purpose. This program will make that clear to them.

For students who do make it through the program, their reward is a rough draft which they can then develop in a word processor. They should find that they have a clear sense of purpose and audience and a large collection of data which they can develop.

Obviously, this approach to writing is limited and should not be used for more than one assignment. The program can, however, serve as a starting point for more advanced discussion about audience and purpose.

The first time you assign the program to students, you might start by demonstrating it in class. Pick a subject and identify a purpose and audience. Then gather the necessary support. As you gather information in class, discuss the organization of paragraphs and the nature of support. After the class has supplied enough information so that the program produces an essay, you might want to give them copies and talk about other ways to develop the major points of the theme.

When students first use the program on their own, remind them of three things.

1) The program takes time to complete, probably 20 to 30 minutes for the average student.
2) To use the program effectively, students must know their subject well. To avoid frustration, you may want to query students before they use the program or have them turn in a list from another *Writer's Helper* program.
3) The program works especially well for small groups of students. With three or four students working together, the program will help increase their attention span and supply enough sources of information so that they can successfully complete the program.

Develop a Single Paragraph

There are times when you will want your students to write a single paragraph or to work on a particularly weak paragraph within an essay. This program is designed to help in those situations.

The program is based on one model for paragraph construction—a two-part paragraph with an initial assertion, followed by several sentences of support or explanation. The program has several examples of how to use the model in either descriptive or argumentative writing, but all the examples use the same organizational sequence.

Descriptive Paragraph

If students choose to write a descriptive paragraph, they will receive a short tutorial which defines and demonstrates assertion sentences and proof sentences. They will then be asked to type a one-sentence assertion and then four sentences which prove their assertion.

The program next asks them to specify the order in which they would like the sentences to appear in their paragraph. The program then prints the paragraph, with the assertion appearing first, followed by the four proof sentences in the order the student has chosen. Students may then save the paragraph, which allows them to later transfer it to a word processor for additional development or to add to their theme.

Argumentative Paragraph

If students choose to write an argumentative paragraph, they will be given three choices for the type of proof they wish to use: examples, statistics, or details. For each choice, they will receive a brief tutorial on assertions and proofs. Each tutorial begins with the same assertion: "Nine-year olds should have the right to vote." Then students are shown an example of how this assertion could be proven.

After students see the appropriate example of proof, they are asked to type an assertion and four sentences of proof, using examples, details, or statistics. Next, the program asks them to name the order in which they would like the four sentences to appear in the paragraph. The program then displays their sentences in the form of a paragraph, with their assertion sentence first, followed by the four proof sentences in the chosen order. Students may then save the paragraph, which will allow them to transfer it to a word processor for additional development or to add it to an essay.

If students are still having trouble supporting the main ideas in their paragraphs after they use this program, you may want to refer them to the *Lists* program. There they can start with a phrase naming their main idea and make a list of related ideas. With such a list in hand, students should be better able to generate four sentences of support for the main idea.

Another way to develop students' abilities to support ideas is to discuss example paragraphs in class. Can your students identify the assertion in the paragraph? Can they identify the kind of proof being used? Can they identify the proof sentences in the paragraph?

You may want to start with a strong paragraph so that students can easily see a long list of proofs. Next, select a paragraph which has some support, but not as much as the first. Ask students to add proofs to the weaker paragraph.

A possible next step might be to pick a paragraph with numerous assertions and no proof. Students might start by picking one assertion and rejecting the others. Then they can list support for the chosen assertion. Using a computer in class, you can enter the assertion and support sentences to show students what the new paragraph would look like.

4. Evaluate a Writing Project

The programs in this section of *Writer's Helper* are intended to give students some initial reactions to their writing. The programs cannot tell students whether their writing is good or even if it is grammatical, but they can help students think about their writing in an organized way and help them find errors.

The programs are divided into three sections:

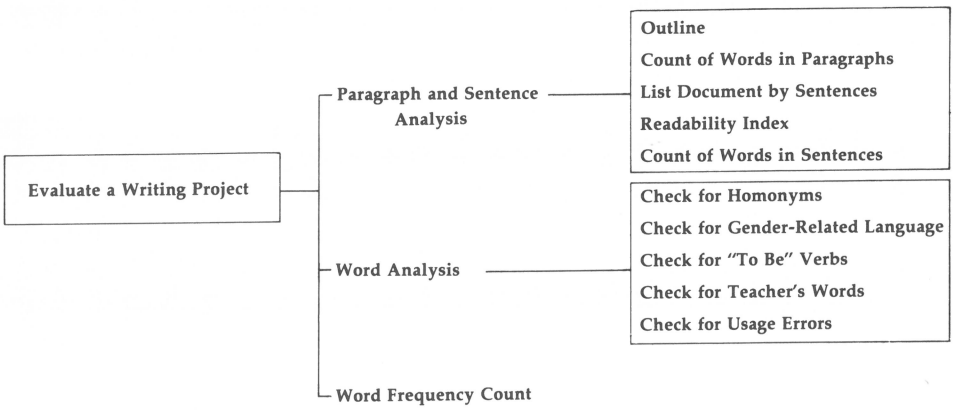


Figure 9. Chart of Programs in Evaluate a Writing Project.

To use the programs, students must first have written a draft using a word processor of their choice and saved it on disk. If students will be using Bank Street Writer, they should not save their documents with a password. *Writer's Helper* cannot read a Bank Street Writer file that has been assigned a password.

Once students choose a program to use, the program asks for the name of the document to be evaluated. The size of the document is important. *Writer's Helper* can analyze documents of approximately 2,300 words or 14 double-spaced, typed pages. *Writer's Helper* will tell the student if it could not read the entire document.

Note: To try out these evaluation programs, use the file DEMO on the Writer's Helper WORK disk.

Of course, the larger the document, the longer the time needed to analyze it. If students will be using the evaluation programs with large documents, you might suggest to them how to divide the document into smaller pieces.

Evaluate

For most of the evaluation programs, each paragraph in the document should begin with a five-space indentation. The document should also not include any formatting commands typically found in word processors for such things as centering or indenting. Because *Writer's Helper* cannot evaluate these commands, it will replace them with tildes during the evaluation. You should tell students to add the formatting commands to their documents only after they have finished using *Writer's Helper.*

During each analysis, students can print a copy of the results. Each program will automatically ask if they want to send the results of the analysis to the printer. For the Word Analysis programs, they can also save a copy of the document with the offending words marked. Students can then use a word processor to locate and change the words, as needed.

For the Word Analysis programs, students can evaluate the same document for several types of words in the same session. *Writer's Helper* will save the marked words from each evaluation and add new ones from each type of evaluation, so that students end up with one marked file containing words they must check in a word processor. The danger is that students may use all the programs in one session. When they return to the word processor to make revisions, they may have forgotten why they marked the word. You should warn students to evaluate each document for only two or three types of analyses at any one session. In fact, *Writer's Helper* keeps track of the number of marked words and will warn students when they are reaching a high number.

Outline Document

This program prints the first sentence of every paragraph that begins with a five-space indentation. (Paragraphs without the five-space indentation are omitted from the analysis.) The purpose of the program is to help students see particular qualities of their writing by isolating the initial sentences. Without other sentences to distract them and with each sentence brought into close proximity with the others, it should be easier for students to focus their attention.

If transitional phrases are present, they should be obvious to even novice writers (and their absence should be just as clear). Another major point to look for in these initial sentences is whether they indicate logical development of ideas. Placed in a row, students should be able to trace the progression of the idea they are trying to describe. If the opening sentences give no clear sense of direction to the essay, the student may not be using initial topic sentences (there is no absolute rule that she should), but it may also show a lack of direction.

A third point to check in these initial sentences is consistency of tone and point of view. Students may lose track of point of view while reading the entire theme, but by seeing just a piece of each paragraph, they should be able to notice any shifts in tone or point of view.

Count of Words in Paragraphs

This program graphs each paragraph that begins with a five-space indentation. It numbers each paragraph, prints one star for every five words in the paragraph, and then prints the total number of words in the paragraph. It also prints an average paragraph length for all paragraphs and the total number of words in the essay.

The program will also note any paragraphs that are either very long or very short and print one of the following messages:

If any paragraph is shorter than 50 words:

> "At least one of your paragraphs is very short. If you aren't quite sure what to say in that paragraph, you may want to run the paragraph writing program in the first section of *Writer's Helper* to help you develop the paragraph."

If any paragraph is longer than 200 words:

> "At least one of your paragraphs is very long. You may have two or more paragraphs mixed into one. Check to see if every sentence in the paragraph relates to the topic sentence. If some don't, either drop them or put them in a separate paragraph."

Of course, just because paragraphs are of reasonable length is no guarantee they are good. The paragraphs could be padded with extraneous nonsense or simply repeat the same essential idea over and over. But the program's graph and messages can point out two characteristics of weak paragraphs in a way that students can't ignore.

To help teach paragraph development, you may want your students to use the *Develop a Single Paragraph* program in the first section of *Writer's Helper* which shows how to develop paragraphs using examples, statistics, and details (see Chapter 3).

You could also use this program in a class demonstration. Using an undeveloped essay, run the program in class to show its weaknesses. Have the class suggest sentences to add to the essay and use a word processor to revise the essay. Then run the program again.

If you find students are padding their paragraphs, you could make a word list for them (see the section "Teacher's Words" below) that picks up gems like "utilize" when they mean "use", "in recent times" when they mean "recently," and "in order to" when they mean "to."

As for paragraphs which are really just six sentences that restate the topic sentence in other ways, there is currently no substitute for the red pencil.

List Document By Sentences

This program breaks each paragraph into a list of sentences. The primary intent of the program is to help students see each sentence in isolation so that spotting grammar errors is easier. Such a list should also highlight the use of parallelism.

Besides easing editing, the program could also be used to point out sentence structure errors to students with fewer distractions from surrounding sentences.

Lists of sentences could also be useful when teaching sentence combining. Short, related sentences would be increasingly visible in the list. You could mark them and ask students to use a combining technique to create new sentences.

Readability Level

This program uses the Fogg Index to compute a readability level. The formula uses the number of words with three or more syllables, and the number of words per sentence in the first 100 words of a text.

Grade Level = .4 * (number of long words/100 +
number of words/number of sentences)

Since a minimum of 100 words is necessary for the formula, no grade level is given for shorter passages.

Like all readability formulas, this formula is as much alchemy as science since many short words are difficult concepts, and shorter sentences are often very complex. Thus, complicated writing may receive a lower reading level from the analysis than it should, and often simplistic prose is given a higher reading level than it deserves.

The concern of this program is not to identify a true reading level for the essay, but to make students aware that readers have different ability levels and needs, and that their writing should match their readers. To emphasize this, when students choose this program, it asks them to identify the level of their readers (from the range 1 = first grade, 16 = college senior). The program than computes a readability level for the essay and compares it with the grade level the student declared for the readers.

If the level of the essay is more than two years above or below the declared level, the program gives one of the following messages:

For a readability level two years below the declared level:

> "You seem to be writing below your audience. You may want to run the sentence graph to see if most of your sentences are short and choppy. Maybe you should combine a few. Also check your vocabulary. Are you using vague, one-syllable words like "nice" and "lots"? Use more specific words to rise to the level of your audience."

For a readability level two years above the declared level:

> "You seem to be writing above your audience. This may be okay if you wish to challenge them, but it may also confuse them. Run the sentence graph to see if some of your sentences are long and clumsy. Divide one or two long sentences to make your writing easier to read. (But be careful not to create any sentence fragments in the process.)"

One reason the program asks for the reading level of the intended audience is to help students realize that essays with higher readability levels are not necessarily better essays. They may in fact be more mature, but elaborate prose only creates confusion if the reader is young.

Of course, in most cases students will find that their writing level is well below their audience, which gives you an opportunity to discuss sentence combining and word choice. The word list you create for the Teacher's Words program (see the section "Teacher's Words" below) can help find immature words like "nice" and "very" and offer alternatives. For sentence combining, you might have the student prepare several possible ways to combine two or three sentences, chose one he likes best, and then use the readability program to analyze the new sentence.

Count of Words in Sentences

This program prints a graph of each sentence followed by the number of words in the sentence. Students should gain two pieces of information from the sentence graph.

First, they (and you) can see if they are writing with a variety of syntactic patterns. If they have only one sentence style and thus one sentence length, their writing may be grammatically correct only because they have found one safe sentence pattern. Ideally, writing should include a variety of sentence lengths as an indicator of a variety of sentence styles: sentences that state facts, sentences that elaborate, and sentences designed for impact.

Second, students can use the sentence graph to locate likely candidates for grammatical errors. Usually, the longest sentences are the likeliest candidates for run-ons, while the shortest may be fragments.

Check for Homonyms

This program searches line by line for commonly confused homonyms. (See Appendix A for the complete list of homonyms.) When the program finds one of these words, it prints a message. For example, for the word "your", it would print:

your = possessive of "you." Example: Your coat is in the closet.

you're = contraction of "you are." Example: You're going to miss the bus.

It is up to the student to determine whether she has used the correct spelling. The program then asks the student if she wants to mark the word so that she can later use a word processor to change it.

Check for Gender-Related Language

This program checks the document for words and phrases which may be gender biased. (See Appendix B for the complete list of words and messages.) While looking for gender-biased words is a new editing activity for most students, it is an important one. As teachers of language we all know the destructive power of slanted writing, and the need to do all we can to avoid the reinforcement of negative stereotypes through language.

This program won't find all cases of gender-biased language, but it will find enough to raise the issue for students and support your instruction about this subject.

Check for To Be Verbs

This program looks for these forms of the verb "to be":

is, are, were, be, am, was, and been.

Since these verbs can be used as linking verbs as well as in passive constructions, not all of the highlighted words will be passives. The analysis, however, at least reminds students of the different classes of verbs.

The program highlights the verb and asks the student to consider whether the construction is passive. You must decide what to say to students about passives and how much direction to give students for choosing active alternatives.

Teacher's Words

This program gives you a way to use the computer to check students' writing for words or phrases of your choice. The words can be usage errors, spelling demons, budding examples of pompous prose, or words you have been teaching your students and want them to use.

You can create a list of up to 25 words or phrases you want the program to find and a corresponding message for the program to print when it finds each word or phrase.

To create your list of words, follow this procedure:

1) Place the *Writer's Helper* PROGRAM disk in Drive 1 and start the computer.
2) From the main menu, select option 6, Management Utilities. (If you have previously removed the Management Utilities option from the menu as explained in Chapter 2, press ESC to get to the Management Utilities menu.)
3) From the Management Utilities menu, select option 1, Work on Word List. From the subsequent menu, you can then choose options to create a new word list, add to an existing word list, or edit and examine an existing word list. After you choose one of these options, follow the instructions on the screen to enter or edit words.
4) You may enter up to 25 words or phrases and a corresponding message for each.
5) When you indicate you are finished typing words, the program will ask if you want to save the list.

Once you have created your list, students can run the Teacher's Words program and it will search their writing for the words in your list and print the response you entered for any occurrence of the word.

The type of list you enter may vary according to your current objectives. One week you may enter a list of weasel words ("nice," "good," "very," "lots") that are cluttering your students' writing. The next week you could create a list of spelling demons and respond with the correct spelling. If students' essays contain a number of usage errors, you could create a list that shows the correct usage of such words as "affect/effect," "lie/lay," "between/among." When pomposity is the problem, you can use the list to highlight words such as "utilize" and "interface" and suggest alternatives like "use" and "meet."

You can also use the list to reinforce vocabulary you are teaching in class. Create a list of words you would like students to use in their essays and respond with "Way to go!" when the program finds one.

Check for Usage Errors

This program checks the document for common usage errors. (See Appendix C for the complete list of words and messages.) In most cases the program simply identifies potential problem words and then gives examples of correct usage. Here is an example:

complementary = completes or makes perfect. Example: Jack's and Jim's talents are complementary.

complimentary = expressing a compliment; free. Example: Beth made several complimentary remarks about her students. They sent me a complimentary copy of the book.

The student may then mark the word so that he can later use a word processor to change it.

This is a program you may want to emphasize when you are doing units on the primary usage errors novice writers commit.

Word Frequency Count

This program computes and displays a word frequency count for the document. Students may specify up to 20 words to be excluded from the count, for example, "the," "a," and "and."

Word frequency counts will help you determine if students are using the same adjective endlessly, or limiting their verbs to a safe few. If so, you can circle the overused words and discuss synonyms with the students.

Because the program lists all words in the document, you can also use the list as a spelling checker. Sometimes the list will reveal non-words created by typographical errors ("wll" instead of "will").

The program's summary can also be useful. It counts the total number of words in the document and the total unique words. The higher the proportion of unique words, the greater the vocabulary range (or number of spelling errors) in the text. The greater vocabulary range might be the result of linguistic maturity, but it might also result from the use of specific examples, anecdotes, or other illustrations which create lively writing. And of course a low proportion of novel words can be an immediate sign of vague, empty prose and redundant sentences.

After you have tried the program with your students, you might use it as part of a literature class. Such programs have often been used by literary researchers to analyze text. It might impress students to see the range of vocabulary used even in the simple stories of authors like Twain or Hemingway. If your students are sufficiently advanced, you might have them use the program as a tool to detect how an author effects changes in mood within a work, or how an author's style changes over time.

Using the Evaluation Programs with Writing Assignments

When students first use the *Writer's Helper* evaluation programs, they will probably be most interested in *Readability Level* and the *Teacher's Words* list. While these programs are valuable, you will want to remind students that the most important feature to look for is organization, then readability, and finally, correct spelling. Readability level is unimportant if their paragraphs wander from point to point or never explain points they raise. Nor does it matter if words are spelled correctly, if they are part of a paragraph which will have to be deleted because it bears no relation to the idea of the essay.

You might also have students routinely print their analyses so they can refer to them later while they are revising and also to turn in with their essays. In a writing conference with the student, you might start by having the student identify his subject, purpose, and audience, and then refer to the printed outline to see if the paragraphs at least begin in a way which develops the central idea of the paper. You can also check for transitions which signal major shifts in direction for the essay.

The next step might be to look at the results of the *Count of Words in Paragraphs* program to spot any obviously underdeveloped paragraphs and discuss how these might be more fully constructed. Another check might be to see that paragraphs which look complete actually contain information which is relevant to the subject.

Having dealt with matters of organization, the readability score will let you discuss audience and what steps to use in meeting the needs of the audience. You will also want to discuss examples and statistics and other forms of support appropriate for the intended reader.

The readability score also lets you talk about sentence combining and vocabulary level. You may require that essays be rewritten until they are within two years of the audience's grade level. (Remember, however, that readability scores are only rough estimates.)

Discussing the results of the *Count of Words in Sentences* can be more difficult. The graph can help to identify long sentences with likely grammatical errors, as well as short sentences which may be fragments. Another use of the graph is to check for sentence variety. If the sentences are roughly the same length, the student may have a limited syntactic ability and may need work on sentence combining; or perhaps the student is hiding behind a safe sentence structure and needs encouragement to experiment with new sentence structures; or the student hasn't begun to think about writing style and needs to study professional writers more closely. The sentence graph only serves as the starting place for analysis and discussion.

If the results of the "to be" verb check show a high incidence of these verbs, the student may simply need to expand his vocabulary. You might have the student make a list of possible action verbs to replace each "to be" verb. Later, you can work together on deciding when to use the alternative verbs and when to stay with the original verb.

The program may also show passivity in your best students, however. Given what has become the style of lawyers and bureaucrats, students who have read widely may see passive voice as more mature. For these students, you may need to have them read mature writing which is also active. Or use the logic of extremes and give them a recent bureaucratic tract which is totally incomprehensible.

At the word level, the *Homonym Checker* and your *Teacher's Words* list should supply information that students can use independently. You may, however, want to keep track of words which students are misspelling often and periodically update your list. Words which are currently ripe for misspelling seem to change over the course of a semester. Your *Teacher's Words* list will be most effective if it changes, too.

Class Activities

While students will generally use these programs individually, there are also a number of class activities using these programs.

Composition Skills

One way to teach organization is to give students copies (or create an overhead transparency) of an essay outline produced by the *Outline Document* program. Ask students to identify the subject of the essay, the purpose of the author, and the likely contents of each paragraph. Then show them the original essay. If they identified the subject and purpose correctly, ask them to explain how the initial sentences of the outline helped them answer correctly. If they did not identify the subject and purpose correctly, ask them to rewrite the initial sentences so that they are more useful.

Graphs from three or four *Count of Words in Paragraphs* could help in teaching paragraph development techniques. Ask students to identify what means of development were used in longer paragraphs. After they identify techniques (such as examples, details, anecdotes), have them use those techniques to improve the content of shorter paragraphs.

To demonstrate the variety of sentences styles common in writing, type into the word processor a column from the newspaper, a passage from a grade school textbook, a selection from a magazine, and a page or two from a college textbook. Ask students to guess the readability level for each piece. Then run the *Readability Level*, *Count of Words in Sentences*, and *"To Be" Verb Check* programs while students watch. Based on the results of the analyses, ask students to identify why their guesses were right or wrong. Then have them rewrite one of the passages in a readability level to match another passage. A college textbook rewritten for grade school children or Ann Landers rewritten for high school graduates should both be interesting projects. Run students' revised passages through the readability program again to see how close they came to writing for the intended audience.

A similar activity would have students identify the level of passivity in several passages and then rewrite a passive passage in a more active voice. Then take an active passage (a newspaper report on an accident) and rewrite it in passive voice. In both cases, students can run the revised passages through the *"To Be" Verb Check* program to analyze their revisions.

At the word level, the *Teacher's Words* list should allow you to demonstrate a variety of vocabulary skills. For instance, following a unit on Latin roots, you could create a list of the roots followed by the English equivalent. Then run the program on a passage of advanced writing that students might have trouble understanding. This should first point out how much Latin adult writers use, while the responses with English equivalents should help them understand the passage (and see how useful knowing Latin can be).

Another way to help in vocabulary growth is to have students make a list of simple words and some alternatives. Put their lists into the *Teacher's Words* list and then run an analysis of newspaper columns or stories to see how often professional writers use such words.

If your students are older, you might want to create a list of jargon or "buzz" words and their English equivalents. One list could be words bureaucrats use, another could be words teachers use (we have more jargon than we care to admit). Most of the learning would occur simply from creating the list and the realization that jargon exists. Students could then type examples of teacher or bureaucratic writing into a word processor and run the *Teacher's Words* list to see just how much jargon some people use. The list of English equivalents would give them alternatives to use for rewriting. Of course, a good discussion might result from determining when rewriting in English should occur. If a teacher is writing to a teacher, is jargon permitted? What if a teacher is writing to a parent? Does bureaucratic jargon make sense even to other bureaucrats?

Literary Analysis

While most of us become fairly adept at discussing literary themes, character development, and the like, we tend to omit literary style from class discussion because students have trouble recognizing the differences in style between authors and because it is difficult for us to demonstrate these differences. The *Writer's Helper* evaluation programs offer a few ways to look at literary style.

For a start, have students enter brief passages from two different works by the same author into a word processor. Then run the evaluation programs on the passages to see how the readability levels, sentence variety, and passive verb use compare. From these analyses can you form any generalizations about the sentence style to expect from a given author? The level of passivity? Can you determine what makes the author's readability level what it is?

Next, choose a passage from a different author and have students run the same analyses. How different are the two authors in style? What makes them different? Is it sentence structure? Sentence type?

Evaluate

Having examined the differences between authors, now choose two different passages by the same author, this time looking for passages which are written in a different mood. For example, use an active scene from *Huck Finn* followed by one of the more contemplative passages. Run the evaluation programs to see if there are differences in sentence structure and passivity which contribute to the mood of the scene. Does the readability level change?

The Word Analysis programs should also provide a way to analyze literary style. Presumably, the *Homonym Check* would find little that was errant, but the *Teacher's Words* list should be useful. Shakespeare was fascinated with eyes and to read any of his plays is to encounter endless synonyms for the eye.

To help students see the pervasiveness of symbols in an author's work, ask them to identify one symbol used by an author, then list all the possible synonyms for the symbol, and put the word and its synonyms in the *Teacher's Words* list. After students type part of the passage into the word processor, use the *Teacher's Words* program to mark every instance of the word, emphasizing just how often some authors embed this main symbol in their writing.

Once students are used to having the computer check for lists of words, they will find many uses for this feature. They can, for example, identify a list of adjectives related to a particular mood, adjectives that celebrate, or haunt, or depress. They can then use the list on a particular passage which attempts to develop that mood and see which adjectives the author used and which adjectives the author used but weren't on their list. They could also compare scenes by different authors (a contemplative poem by Frost and one by Wordsworth) to see which words were used by both and which are original to each author.

The evaluation programs can also be used as a prelude to experimental modification of literature. For instance, after creating a list of adjectives that establish one mood for Sylvia Plath and another list which establishes the same mood for Eudora Welty, students could use a word processor's search and replace capability to exchange adjectives between Welty and Plath. The resulting incongruities should help students see the essence of the authors.

Just for fun, you might try a similar effort for words that characterize. If students can make a list of words authors use to establish a "good" character, they can then look to see where authors differ in characterization, and end by exchanging characterization adjectives between two authors. Having one author's character praised with the adjectives of another should be both fun and educational.

As you become more comfortable with using the evaluation programs, you should find them a good starting point for class discussion which you might otherwise miss.

5. The Writer's Helper Approach to Composition

Current composition pedagogy is often divided into two camps:

The **product** approach where students are given an assignment, write independently, and then receive a grade for their efforts.

The **process** approach where class time is spent examining purpose and audience before writing, and revising and rewriting compositions after the initial effort.

Few teachers exactly follow one of these approaches. Recently, however, teachers are spending more time exploring a subject in class before students begin to write, and often revise first for audience and purpose and only later for grammar and spelling.

Ellen Nold has summarized these writing objectives and created the taxonomy shown in Figure 10. It was her intention that writers, even student writers, begin by examining the questions at the top of her list, and only later concern themselves with items at the bottom of the list. An essay which fails in its stated purpose and forgets the intended audience is a bad essay, even if it is grammatically correct.

Nold, E. 1975. Fear and trembling: The humanist approaches the computer. College Composition and Communication 26: 269-73.

Thematic Focus: Choosing a subject.

Rhetorical Aims: Deciding who the audience is and what their expectations are.

Genre: Determining what kind of writing is appropriate.

Structure: Using transitional devices and paragraphs.

Syntax: Maintaining logical word order and correct grammar.

Diction: Choosing individual words for effectiveness.

Standard Written English: Obeying writing conventions.

Spelling and Punctuation: Checking for errors.

Copying: Checking for handwriting legibility.

Figure 10. Ellen Nold's Taxonomy of Writing Objectives

But how do we get students to think about audience and purpose before they write? Students typically spend minimal effort planning what they will write and even less time revising. Class activities can demonstrate how to plan and revise, but they do not guarantee that students will use these skills outside of class.

Writer's Helper was designed to solve this problem by automating the initial planning and exploration stages of writing and generating initial responses to students' writing to encourage them to revise. To show how to use the package for these purposes, let's step through two example writing assignments.

Example One:

300 Word Essay, No Assigned Topic, No Given Audience

Writing without an assigned topic can be especially difficult when no purpose or audience is given. Even students who have the basic writing ability for such a task often wade haphazardly into the assignment and end up with an essay topic of little interest to them or one which demands research they are unwilling or unable to do. The result is usually two pages of lifeless generalities.

The Find a Subject programs in *Writer's Helper* are designed to overcome these problems and aid students in selecting a topic.

Find A Subject

Lists asks the student to name possible topics; *The Questioner* poses questions to start students thinking. Both programs are intended to help students find three or four topics to write about. Both programs will print the lists and questions for later reference.

The purpose here is not to find one topic to write about. Premature closure on one topic leads students to ignore better possibilities and to stay with a topic even after finding they are insufficiently prepared to write about it. Students should instead use these programs to list several possible topics and then narrow the list to three or four tentative topics. They might also want to try the *Brainstorm* program to see if any other ideas surface. They can bring the printed lists to you for your advice or discuss it with other students.

Explore

Once students have a list of several topics, the next step is to use the Explore programs to weed out the topics of insufficient interest or information. The purpose of the Explore programs is to help students thoroughly explore their topics, to begin to acquire points they may want to include in their essays, but also to discover which topics are beyond their abilities. If students can't answer a series of questions about a topic, they discover for themselves that they aren't ready to write about the topic yet.

Three Ways of Seeing asks students 12 to 15 questions about their topic. A few of the questions may not be relevant, and others may take them in uninteresting directions, but the program will force them to think about their topic in detail.

Teacher's Questions is a list of questions you create for your students. It is intended for use with assigned topics, so it may not be useful in this example.

Crazy Contrasts works best when students are in danger of writing two pages of cliches because they have chosen an old, familiar topic. Once they have used this program to compare their topic to such things as day-old meat loaf, they should gain a new perspective on the topic.

Students can save and print the questions and their answers to the Explore programs. You may want to talk to students about their answers so you can steer them in fruitful directions or point out the futility of proceeding with a topic which is producing no real answers. Having completed these programs, students should have narrowed their list to one or two promising topics.

Organize

Students should next try the Organize programs. These programs are intended primarily to help them begin to organize their information about the topic, but they also introduce possible audiences.

Compare and Contrast and *Debating an Issue* are the simplest of these programs. Both yield a simple sentence outline which students can print or use as the basis for continued writing in a word processor.

Trees is more complicated than the first two programs in that it asks students to cluster information about a topic. This program can also be used as the start of a paragraph outline or can guide students toward limiting their topic.

Five-Paragraph Theme is a time-consuming program which encourages students to support an initial thesis and then uses their answers to various questions to generate a rough draft of an essay for them.

Because the Organize programs each require 10 to 25 minutes to complete, you may want to guide students to one or another of them. At this point, students will generally be working alone and will be close to writing their essay. You may want students to print their outlines from these programs so you can check the correctness and discuss possible ways of developing their major points. If you are satisfied with their outlines, students can transfer them to a word processor and use them as the topic sentences of their essays.

The Word Processor

Your students should now be ready to write their first draft. They have started with several topics, narrowed them to one, thought about the topic in some detail, and begun to determine how best to organize their ideas about the topic.

Using a word processor, students can retrieve their outline to give them a sense of direction as they begin to write. Instead of wandering off the subject as so often happens, they have an outline in front of them on the screen to follow. They can modify the outline or add to it by supplying

support for the topic sentences. Other students may prefer to ignore the outline while writing and only look at it later to see if they stayed on the subject.

Students who have trouble developing coherent papers should follow the outline closely to give them additional guidance. Once the outline is visible on the screen, the student can move the cursor to the end of each topic sentence and begin writing. This method of using the outline is restrictive, but it may be necessary for some students. For others, the process of writing may lead to additional insights which render the outline less useful.

Once students have completed their first draft, they should save their work and print the draft so that they have a copy to begin revising.

Analysis

The process of revision can start with the evaluation programs, which students can run after they have completed a first draft. Since students can print the results of the evaluation programs, you may want to ask to see copies so you can direct students revision efforts.

When checking students' work, look first for outlines which have no transitions or ramble. If a paragraph count shows little development, you will want to discuss possible ways of enhancing the content of the paragraph. *Writer's Helper* contains a tutorial on paragraphs which should help students who are unclear on how to develop paragraphs beyond making vague assertions. (See "Developing a Single Paragraph" in Chapter 3.)

The readability results should let you discuss matching the essay to an audience. The passive verb checker lets you examine that element of style, and the sentence graph will show if the student is using sentence variety or has found a safe sentence structure and uses it constantly. The graph should also help you point to places where sentence combining would be beneficial. Sentence combining and rewriting can also be aided through the program which lists sentences. By seeing sentences in isolation students are more likely to spot sentence structure errors.

Once you have examined the essay at these two levels, you can look for misused or misspelled words.

Ultimately, we want our students to acquire revision strategies which they will use independently. Students may need your guidance in interpreting the analysis of *Writer's Helper* the first time or two, but with repeated use they should be able to use the information with minimal guidance.

Another point to remember about the information from the evaluation programs is that it is not a grade. These programs can only measure several traits of writing where humans can measure dozens. More importantly, the information is intended as a starting point for revision—not a comment on past work. Students should consider the information simply as direction for where to begin work on the next draft of their essay.

Once students have analyzed their essays and established a plan of revision, they can return to the word processor to make the needed changes. They can then resave their work and run the evaluation programs on the new draft. This revision process can continue for as many drafts as necessary.

Example Two:

300 Word Essay, Assigned Topic, Known Audience

This kind of writing assignment is more common in classrooms. Students have a clearer idea about an acceptable topic, often discuss possible development strategies in class, and learn about the needs of the specific audience being addressed. Nevertheless, it is still easy for some students to prepare inadequately for writing. *Writer's Helper* can be useful for this kind of writing assignment too, by emphasizing different prewriting programs.

Students might still begin with the Find a Subject programs. *The Questioner* will be inappropriate, but *Lists* can now serve as a way of listing ideas about the chosen subject. Students could use the program to list everything they know about the topic and then later use a printed copy of the list as a reminder when writing. Students can use *Brainstorms* as a scratchpad for their initial thoughts about the topic.

The Explore programs will all be useful for this kind of assignment. *Crazy Contrasts* is a good activity to use with the class as a way to break students out of cliches or to generate figurative language. *Three Ways of Seeing* might also be a good class activity as the class as a group answers this program's questions about the topic. And *Teacher's Questions* can be used however you like, since you can enter these questions yourself (see Chapter 3).

After using the Explore programs, you may want students to turn in copies of their work to see how well they have responded to the questions about intent and audience. In any case, you will want to be sure that students use these prewriting programs as a way to clarify their feelings about the chosen subject and as a way to amass information for when they actually write their essay.

Since the Organize programs are highly directive in how they organize information about a topic, you may want to choose one approach in advance and either have students go through it individually or use it as part of a class exercise. If students use the program individually, they will have an outline they can use later for writing.

From this point, *Writer's Helper* can be used as described in the first example. The outline can serve as an organizer for writing, while the answers from other programs can help supply material for writing. Students can then use a word processor to write drafts and the evaluation programs to direct their revisions.

The one major difference will occur when students receive their readability level and word lists from the evaluation programs. Since you have established the audience as part of the assignment, the grade level computed by the readability level can be the start of discussion on how the student's sentence structure either matches or misses the needs of the reader. Similarly, the word list you create for the assignment (see Chapter 4) can be directed toward initiating discussion of audience needs. Discussions of both points can be individualized or part of general class discussion.

As you become familiar with the *Writer's Helper*, you will find it is a flexible tool, not a lock-step method of composition. Some programs will be appropriate for some assignments, but not for others. Some programs are easily used by individuals, while others are better for small groups or with the entire class. The best way to use the programs is whatever way you find appropriate.

6. Introducing Students to a Word Processor

The activities in *Writer's Helper* assume that students will use a word processor, either to expand their work from the prewriting programs or to analyze text they have written with a word processor. The following suggestions may help you introduce your students to whatever word processor they will be using.

If your students are new to word processors, you should keep their first writing assignments short and introduce only one or two functions of the word processor at a time. A good first assignment might be a single paragraph or a one-page letter.

As for introducing the capabilities of a word processor, few professional writers know how to use every feature of the word processor they may use every day. We can hardly expect students who may use a word processor only a few times a semester to know how to block move or partial save.

When your students first use the word processor, it is really only essential that they know how to:

place the disk in the disk drive;

type a few sentences;

correct errors and retype them;

print what they have written; and

save what they written to a disk of their own.

With these few, simple skills, students can begin writing with the word processor.

To establish these skills, you could begin by demonstrating the word processor in class. Then have one or two students follow your example while the class watches. As a first assignment, you might have students type a simple paragraph of your choice. Devise an assignment sheet which gives step-by-step instructions on how to start the word processor, how to type, how to correct errors, how to save what they have typed, and how to print their file.

Once your students have typed and printed a short paragraph, they will be comfortable enough to use the word processor for short writing assignments. More importantly, they will have acquired the habit of saving and printing what they write. You will want to encourage this habit in order to improve your students' revision habits.

To help students develop additional skills with the word processor, your next writing assignment might be to load the paragraph from the first assignment into the computer from their disks and then make several changes. The assignment should explain how to load a file from the disk,

how to move the cursor around the screen, insert and delete, and, just as important, add to what they have written. You may want to show them how to change the width of margins or how to make other format changes, but most of what they need to know to use a word processor is contained in these first two assignments.

Your next step might be to have students type in a short assignment of their own writing—a paragraph on computers, a list of famous people, a short letter to a friend. Keep the assignments short so that each student will get a turn at the computer. Short writing assignments will also lessen the importance of typing skills. By their second or third use of the word processor, students will be comfortable enough with using the computer for writing so that they can concentrate more on their writing and less on the computer.

Teaching Revision

Teachers who use word processors with their students say the most important single benefit may be students' willingness to revise. Where before they rarely made more than cosmetic changes, now students are willing to make substantive changes. However, while the word processor makes such behavioral changes possible, it doesn't guarantee them. There are still a few things you can do to help revision become a normal part of your students' writing process.

To start, make sure your students save what they write onto a disk of their own. Without a disk, a computer is just an expensive typewriter. With a disk, students can change their writing without having to retype the whole essay. They just load the electronic copy of their essay from the disk and start where they left off. Your students should never have to retranscribe their writing again.

Once students are in the habit of saving their work on a disk as well as on paper, you should schedule their time on the computer so that it is broken into short blocks spaced over a period of time. If students only get to the computer once the day before an assignment is due, when will they be able to revise? They will need several blocks of time on the computer with time between to discuss their current draft with you or with fellow students in a writer's workshop. When they go back to the word processor, they will have time to revise and reasons to revise.

Giving students time, of course, is the problem. If your students are poor typists, they will need more time to enter their work. There are a number of typing programs your students can use to help them pick up speed, but some students will always be slow typists. It is also probable that you will have few computers available for class use. Trying to get 25 students on two or three computers is no mean feat.

No matter how pressed you are for time, however, you can't expect students to revise if they don't have time to use the computer when they need it. One solution is to keep writing assignments short. Another solution is to have just part of the class use the word processor for particular assignments. After a few short, initial assignments to show the class how to use the computer,

you might want to go back to your regular writing assignments, but have only one group of students use the word processor while the others use paper and pencil. As long as each group knows they will have a turn, there should be no fairness problem, and the crush around the computer should be reduced.

The next step in encouraging revision is to increase your grading standards. Since changing text is easy for students who are using a word processor, you should be less satisfied with vague phrases, misspellings, and errors of organization. If an example is needed to prove a point, mark where it should go and ask the student to insert one. If a paragraph contains a sentence that really doesn't fit, ask the student to substitute a better sentence.

The *Writer's Helper* evaluation programs should help you in this process of grading. Since some of the programs point out problems with homonyms, gender-biased language, and word usage, you should expect that students correct all such errors before they turn in a paper to you. You might also require students to turn in the results of the outline and paragraph length programs with their essays. If these programs show incoherent or incomplete development, you may want students to explain why they did not respond to these problems *before* they turned in the paper. You are giving your students a series of writing aids and a program which allows them to make changes easily; you have the right to expect better writing as a result.

Merging the Prewriting Programs

The *Writer's Helper* prewriting programs have two functions: to help students find and investigate a writing topic and to give them a start for their writing. Whether it is answers to questions, an outline, or a paragraph, any writing students have done in the prewriting programs can be transferred to the word processor where it can serve as the basis for their writing.

Here's how such a process might work. Suppose your students had worked through the *Debating an Issue* program. When they were done, they would have saved the outline created by the program. To use that outline as the basis for an essay, they would load the outline into the word processor, move the cursor to the end of the first reason opposing their assertion, and begin inserting sentences supporting the reason. They would then repeat this process for each reason in the outline.

Language Arts Activities with a Word Processor

Once students are comfortable with the basic commands of the word processor and have completed two or three short writing projects, there are a number of writing activities which use the word processor's capabilities to improve instruction of language skills.

Creating Writing

Sandwich Stories

In this approach, you give students the first and last sentences of a story and ask them to write a story which leads from the first to the last. Here are some examples:

It was a dark and stormy night.
And they walked home at dawn.

The auditorium was filled with anxious students.
He walked out of the school and into a gently falling snow.

You can write such couplets in advance of the class and place them on a disk. Students retrieve a couplet from the disk, display it on the computer screen, place the cursor at the end of the first sentence, and begin writing. They can write as little or as much as they need to make the connection, and then save their version or print it. Then you can combine all students' version in a book and compare them in class.

Versions of this activity have been done using pencil and paper, but here there is a different visual quality to the activity as the final sentence moves ahead of the student's writing. And, of course, the finished product looks more professional when printed.

A Class Story

Another creative writing activity is to use the word processor to write a class story. You may want to establish a scene and a few characters or you can let the story evolve in class. In either case, one student would load the previous version of the story into the computer from the disk, add his or her paragraph, and then save the augmented version onto the disk again. The student may also print a copy of the story as it exists so far.

This activity should encourage students to read closely what others have written so they can use the same characters and scenes. You could also use this activity as the start of an analysis of fictional types as the class later reads the whole story and analyzes which events in the story seem right for the characters and which seem less probable. Given how easy it is to print the story in readable form, you can print an original and produce enough copies for the whole class to read together.

One-Way Dialogue

In this activity you write (or find in a play) an interesting dialogue, preferably with only two characters. Type the dialogue of one character into the word processor but leave the responses of the other character blank. Students then load the one-sided dialogue into the word processor and enter

their own versions of what the second character says. The word processor will give them as much room for responses as they need. When they are done, they can print their version of the dialogue and compare it with others'.

One way to twist this activity is to use the word processor's automatic search and replace feature to change one or both characters' names or sex and see how the change affects the dialogue.

Composition Skills

Activites for teaching various writing skills such as organization and vocabulary development are often based on work sheets and are often divorced from actual writing. The word processor gives us a number of ways to create units on specific skills, units which are closely tied to the students' own writing. Here are four activities which use the word processor to teach composition skills.

Paragraphing Practice

One way to teach students where to put paragraphs is to type an essay without paragraph markers and have students insert some notation where paragraphs are needed. A way to use the word processor with this idea is to have an unparagraphed essay saved on disk. Students load the essay into the word processor and insert indentations where they belong and then print their versions of the essay. The result is clearer, and the process of pushing sentences down into another line when they make paragraphs may help students see which ideas need to be together and which can be separated.

Sentence Practice

A similar technique can be used with sentences. If you save a paragraph that has no sentence markings, students can load it into the word processor and insert capital letters and punctuation where needed.

Missing Topic Sentences

Another activity is to have students print their original essays, then delete all topic sentences, and print the revised version. How different are the two versions? If the difference is not noticeable, has the student correctly identified the topic sentences?

You could now have students load an essay you have created without topic sentences and then use the word processor to insert topic sentences. Have the students print their versions so they can compare them in class.

Verb Tense

If students are having trouble keeping their verb tenses consistent, you can use the search and replace feature in the word processor to highlight the problems. With the student's original essay loaded in the word processor, identify one verb which is used several times in at least two tenses. With the student sitting with you at the computer, search for and replace the verb,

taking one form such as "was" and replacing it with "is" throughout the essay. Once you have read how that change affects the passage, you may want to reverse the process and replace all instances of "is" with "was."

Search and replace will let you quickly change an entire essay to one tense, look at it, and then change it again to another tense. You can experiment with tense to see which is most appropriate. After the first time you lead a student through a series of such switches, the student should be able to do it unaided.

Language Use Activities

As James Moffett pointed out clearly in his book, *The Universe of Discourse*, we learn language by using language. One of the major advantages offered by the Writer's Workshop approach to writing is that we gain a whole new series of reasons for using language. With the advent of word processors in the English classroom, we now have more ways to use language. Here are three that use the word processor as a prompt for writing.

Electronic Mail

One major use for computers in business is as a message center where people leave messages in the computer's memory and retrieve messages written by others. With connections to phone lines, such electronic mail can connect people across the country or around the world.

In schools we can set up a similar (if smaller) electronic mail system by letting students type messages into a word processor and then save the message onto a class disk under the name of the intended recipient. The recipient reads the message by getting the class disk from the teacher, loading the message from the disk into the word processor, then reading it. The recipient can then write a response to that person or to another person.

Class Debate

Once your students are used to communicating through the computer, another activity that develops naturally is a class debate held on the word processor. In some ways, the debate follows much as a class discussion would, with some subject serving as a starter. Once begun, students can load the debate from the disk, read what has been said so far, and add their own comments. The advantage of the word processor is that it keeps a running transcript of the debate, and all students have a chance to participate over a longer period of time. To prevent quieter students from feeling intimated, you could have students enter their ideas under psuedonyms or without names.

You can use one debate subject for a period of time or change the subject every week. You may want to tie the subject to current class reading or to a current event. In either case, the class will be writing in a way that they find attractive and in a way that will give them additional practice of a critical skill. This activity would also be excellent as a preliminary to writing essays about the subject under debate.

Class Research

Many teachers have students work on group research activities. In younger grades, each student might write a report on a dinosaur which the teacher then collects into a class book on dinosaurs. This same approach can be used at the secondary level for biographies or events in local history. While such class projects stimulate writing, they can become a problem for the teacher if the original essays must be typed before they are duplicated. The essays often go unread and unused.

If the same kinds of research projects are done on a word processor, the typing problem is solved since students can print neat, copyable reports directly from the word processor. The problem with reports not being read is solved if the teacher asks for a follow-up report. For the dinosaur book, the follow-up could be an essay on the food of dinosaurs. Now students must read the original essays to find examples of food choices in others' reports. For the biographies example, a question that generalizes across the individual reports might be something like "Is there a typical childhood that leads to success?"

Such questions ensure that students read the reports, so student writing becomes a resource for others. Where the word processor can take such an activity even farther is in its ability to copy segments of an essay. For example, most word processors allow you to electronically copy and store a paragraph from a text. This feature radically changes how we might cite reports. Where we typically quote authors by copying passages by hand, now we can electronically pull a passage for support and electronically insert it into an essay. Going to secondary sources for examples and documentation is now quick and easy.

Pulling passages electronically from one essay to another also demonstrates how easy plagiarism can become with a word processor. However, it is just this kind of manipulation of words in the computer's memory (known as a "data base" in computer jargon) that will become a major skill as more and more adult writings are stored and published electronically. Why not take your students into the research world of the future? The original authors will enjoy being quoted, and the essay writers will cite research more often because it is easier.

Fiction Analysis

There are a number of activites you can produce yourself with the aid of a word processor which can both test your students' reading ability and stimulate deeper thinking about what they have read.

Character Switch

An activity which involves higher order thinking can be created by typing passage from a story into a word processor and then using the word processor's search and replace feature to change characters' names. If you were teaching *Huckleberry Finn,* for example, you might subtitute "Tom" for "Huck" in a passage. Print the new version and give copies to your students.

Do "Tom's" actions sound like the kinds of things we would expect of him? Why? Would we expect him to talk the way he does?

You could start another discussion by reversing Jim and Huck. What changes in the story, if we now have a Black man rescuing a white teenager? Would such a book have been acceptable to Mark Twain's contemporaries? Would it be acceptable today?

Another example is to substitute girls' names for boys' names in a passage from a sports story. Or take a story with mainly female characters and substitute male names. After your students have read such stories and discussed them, you might give them copies of the original and have them compare the two versions.

The search and replace feature of word processors will let you make multiple versions of any favorite story. Change sex, change race, change surnames from Anglo-Saxon to Spanish or Polish or Native American and see what effects these changes have on students' perceptions of the stories.

Style Switches

One of the hardest elements of fiction or poetry for students to appreciate is style, especially word choice. One way to make them aware of the uses and misuses of language is to enter a passage of a story, poem, or play and switch words with different levels of diction.

You might, for instance, take a passage from *Macbeth* and substitute contemporary slang terms in some of Macbeth's monologues. When "Out, out damned spot" becomes "Go away darned blotch," Macbeth becomes more understandable, but does he arouse our sympathies? You might let students themselves search for and replace words that bother them, but then ask what has been lost from the passage through trite translation. Ultimately, we want to convince students that it isn't enough that fiction be "easy to relate" but that it also contain majesty and even awesomeness.

These are just a few of the activities you can create using a word processor. They need not be time-consuming or expensive. Once you have typed in brief passages or students have typed in their own writing, the capabilities of the word processor to search and replace, edit, and print should give you the freedom to manipulate text in new and interesting ways.

Writer's Helper

Writer's Helper is a collection of 22 programs designed to help you with a writing project. The first eleven programs help you find and explore topics for your writing project. The second eleven programs help you evaluate and revise what you have written. Figure 1 lists the individual programs by name.

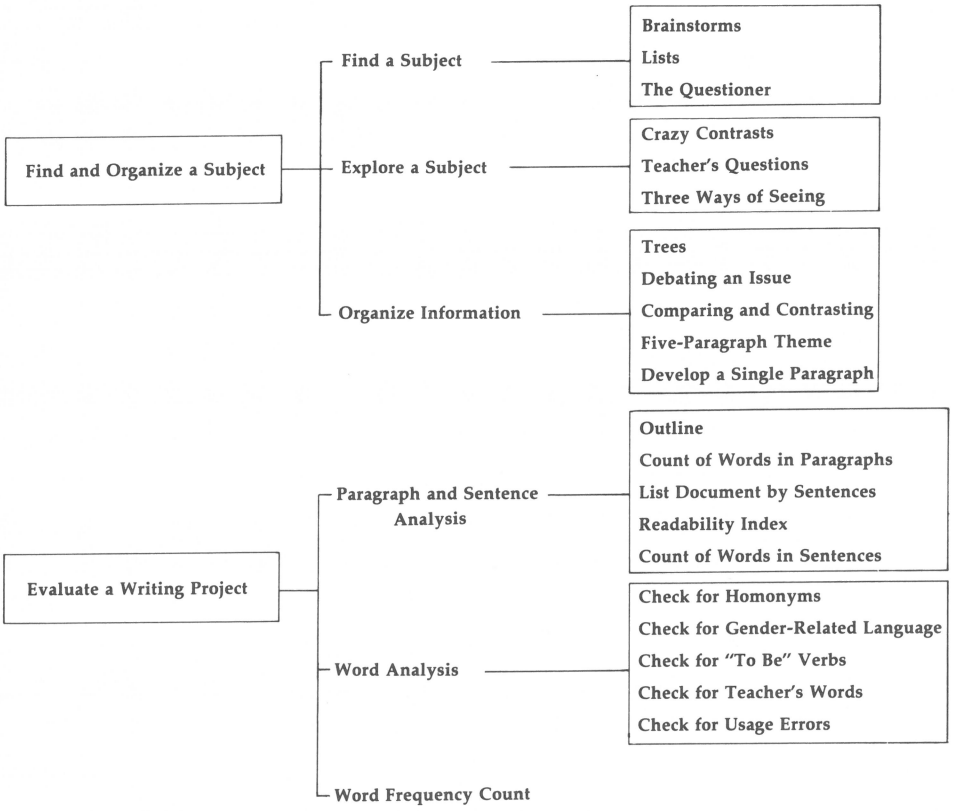


Figure 1. Chart of programs in Writer's Helper.

The typical way to use *Writer's Helper* is in three steps.

Step 1

Use one or two of the programs from **Find and Organize a Subject** to start your writing. When you are done with the programs, save your work onto your *Writer's Helper* WORK disk.

Step 2

Switch to your word processor. *Writer's Helper* works with word processors that accept standard text files and with Bank Street Writer. Transfer your work from your *Writer's Helper* WORK disk to the word processor and continue writing until you have completed a draft of your essay or story. Save what you have written onto your WORK disk.

Step 3

Return to the *Writer's Helper* PROGRAM disk. Choose any of the programs from **Evaluate a Writing Project** to begin reviewing your writing for revisions. If necessary, go back to your word processor and make corrections or additions.

Getting Started

To use the programs, you need two disks. The PROGRAM disk contains the actual computer programs. The WORK disk is for saving your work. Before using any of the programs, make sure you have a WORK disk.

Following your teacher's directions, start the computer with the *Writer's Helper* PROGRAM disk. Following the title page, you should see the *Writer's Helper* Menu.

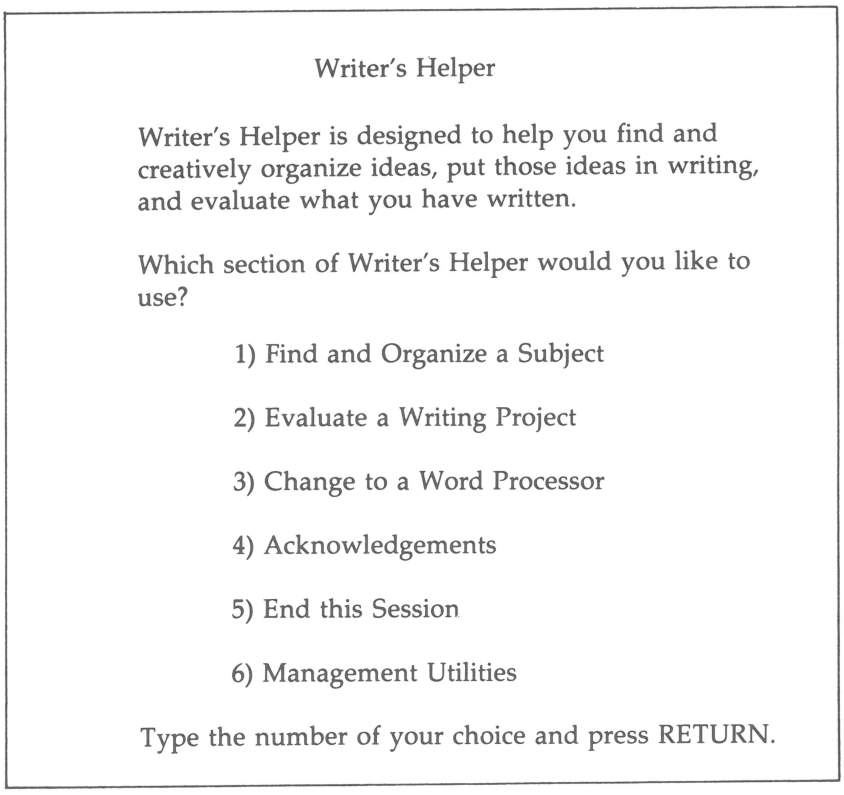
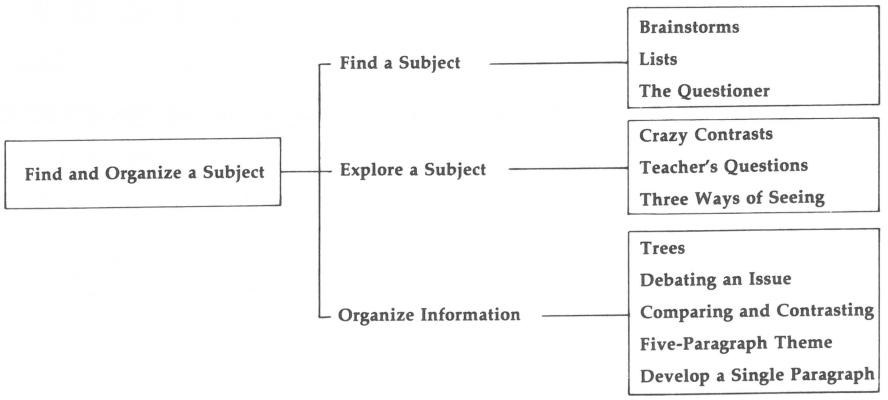

Writer's Helper
Writer's Helper is designed to help you find and creatively organize ideas, put those ideas in writing, and evaluate what you have written.
Which section of Writer's Helper would you like to use?
1) Find and Organize a Subject
2) Evaluate a Writing Project
3) Change to a Word Processor
4) Acknowledgements
5) End this Session
6) Management Utilities
Type the number of your choice and press RETURN.

Figure 2. Writer's Helper Menu.

If you are getting started with a writing project, choose option 1 from this menu, **Find and Organize a Subject.** If you have already written a draft and want to evaluate it, choose option 2, **Evaluate a Writing Project.** Type the number of your choice, and the computer automatically gets the group of programs you want.

Use the third option on this menu, **Change to a Word Processor,** when you are ready to use your word processor and continue writing, or when you have used an evaluation program and want to make corrections or additions with a word processor.

Find and Organize a Subject



The eleven programs in this section of *Writer's Helper* are divided into three levels. Each level has several programs which help you find a subject or explore a subject you have already chosen. You can use the programs in any order.

Here's a brief description of each program in this section.

Find a Subject

3 programs to help select a writing topic:

Brainstorms is a free-writing activity to help you select a subject. You can also use the program as a sketchpad to develop preliminary ideas.

Lists helps you create lists of subjects to locate a topic.

The Questioner asks several questions to help you select a subject.

Explore a Subject

3 programs to help explore a subject you have already chosen:

Crazy Contrasts spurs creative thinking by having you compare a subject of your choice to another, unusual subject.

Teacher's Questions asks a set of questions supplied by your teacher for a specific writing assignment.

Three Ways of Seeing helps you look at a subject in isolation, as a process of change, and in relation to other subjects.

Organize Information

5 programs that show different ways to organize information about your subject:

Trees helps you group your thoughts about a subject into categories and then shows how these ideas form a tree outline.

Debating an Issue asks you for information on both sides of an issue and then shows you how to organize this information for writing.

Comparing and Contrasting helps you create a simple outline of similarities and differences between two subjects.

Five-Paragraph Theme asks a series of questions about your opinions of a subject and then writes a draft of a five-paragraph theme from your answers.

Develop a Single Paragraph shows one way to write individual paragraphs, either descriptive or argumentative.

Using the Programs

It is not expected that you will use all levels, but will proceed to whichever level matches your needs or interest. Nor must you use each program at a given level. The multiple programs at each level allow you to select the approach that matches your interest and style.

Find and Organize a Subject

This section of Writer's Helper will help you prepare to write. You select the kind of help you want.

At the end of each exercise, you can save a copy of what you have written on your WORK disk. You can then use your writing in a word processor as a starting point for your first draft.

You can also immediately print a copy of your writing, if a printer is attached to your computer.

1) Find a Subject
2) Explore a Subject
3) Organize Information about a Subject
4) Develop a Single Paragraph
5) Return to the Writer's Helper Menu
6) End this Session

Type the number of your choice and press RETURN.

Figure 4. Find and Organize a Subject Menu.

To select a group of programs, type the number of your choice indicated on the menu. The program then lists the specific programs under each category. Again, type the number of your choice. From this point, simply follow the instructions on the screen. If you get off to a bad start or if the program isn't going the way you expected, press the ESC key to return to the menu where you can start over or select another program.

At the end of each program (or if you press ESC and have typed more than one line), the program asks if you want to save or print your work. Save your work on your *Writer's Helper* WORK disk. **You cannot save your work onto the *Writer's Helper* PROGRAM disk.**

To print your work, you need a computer with a printer attached. Ask your instructor for directions.

Brainstorms

Purpose

If you can't think of a subject for your writing or start writing and reach a deadend, this program may help. It is intended to help you find ideas by brainstorming—a free-writing activity where you write ideas as quickly as possible. By working quickly, you relax and discover ideas more freely.

To Select the Program

Choose option 1, Find and Organize a Subject, from the *Writer's Helper* menu.

Choose option 1, Find a Subject, from the Find and Organize Menu.

Choose option 1, *Brainstorms,* from the Find a Subject menu.

To Use the Program

The program first asks how many lines you would like for free-writing. Type a number between 3 and 10. The screen clears and the number of lines appears. Just start typing.

Since this is a brainstorming session, you are to type as many ideas as you can, without worrying about spelling or punctuation. The faster you go, the better. Because you aren't supposed to make corrections, the program ignores you if you press the arrow key to back up or the DELETE key. You can correct any mistakes later in the word processor.

And because you are supposed to type ideas as fast as you can, the computer has a built-in timer. If you stop typing for too long, the computer prints a period on the screen to prompt you to get going. It doesn't matter what you say, just type, and you'll see that good ideas start coming to you as you type.

When you have finished brainstorming, the program asks you which idea surprises you and which one interests you. You can use these ideas as topics or as the beginning of more free-writing.

Lists

Purpose

One way to find a subject is to make a list of possible choices. Your first two or three ideas in the list may be your usual ones, but later in the list you will come to ideas which may be more interesting topics for writing.

You can also use *Lists* if you have a subject but aren't sure what to say about it. Use the program to list possible ideas and information about your subject. If your subject is controversial, you could use the program to list information supporting your point of view and then a second list of information opposing it. If the subject is a process, like learning to ride a bicycle, you could list in sequence the parts of the process.

To Select the Program

Choose option 1, Find and Organize a Subject, from the *Writer's Helper* menu.

Choose option 1, Find a Subject, from the Find and Organize Menu.

Choose option 2, *Lists*, from the Find a Subject menu.

To Use the Program

When you are ready to start, the program puts a number on the screen. After the number, type a word or phrase. The brackets on the screen show you how much information you can type. Type any subject that comes to mind. After ten items, the program asks if you want to do more.

The Questioner

Purpose

This program asks you questions to get you thinking about possible subjects. The questions are general ones like, "Who is the strangest person you know?" and "Why do some people have more friends than others?" As you answer the questions, they may help you think of a subject for your writing project.

To Select the Program

Choose option 1, Find and Organize a Subject, from the *Writer's Helper* menu.

Choose option 1, Find a Subject, from the Find and Organize Menu.

Choose option 3, *The Questioner*, from the Find a Subject menu.

To Use the Program

The program presents each question one at a time and waits for your answer. The brackets show how much room you have to type your answer. If a certain question is uninteresting, you can skip to the next question. After answering the first ten questions, you can choose to answer ten more.

Crazy Contrasts

Purpose

Some people write boring essays because they can't think of new things to say about a subject that is very familiar to them. This program is meant to help you find new things to say about a familiar subject by comparing it to crazy things. It might ask you how your subject is like a potted plant or different from an iceberg. You may find it difficult to answer these crazy questions, but if you can, it will help you look at your subject in a new way—a way that may give you ideas about new things to say in an essay.

To Select the Program

Choose option 1, Find and Organize a Subject, from the *Writer's Helper* menu.

Choose option 2, Explore a Subject, from the Find and Organize Menu.

Choose option 1, *Crazy Contrasts*, from the Explore a Subject menu.

To Use the Program

The program first asks you to type the name of your subject. It then begins asking you crazy questions. Answer as many as you can.

Teacher's Questions

Purpose

If your teacher has assigned you a specific topic for your writing, he or she may want to make sure you understand the topic before you begin writing. To do this, your teacher has written a series of questions on the *Writer's Helper* PROGRAM disk. *Teacher's Questions* shows you these questions for you to answer.

To Select the Program

Choose option 1, Find and Organize a Subject, from the *Writer's Helper* menu.

Choose option 2, Explore a Subject, from the Find and Organize Menu.

Choose option 2, *Teacher's Questions*, from the Explore a Subject menu.

To Use the Program

When you begin the program, it shows each question and waits for your answer. The brackets on the screen show you how much room you for have for your answer.

Three Ways of Seeing

Purpose

One way to think of new things to say about a subject is to ask questions about it. This program asks ten to fourteen questions about your subject. The questions are divided into three groups: questions about your subject alone, questions about how your subject has changed over time, and questions comparing your subject to similar things. Typical questions are, "What is least attractive about your subject?" and "How would you compare your subject's appearance to similar subjects?" By answering these questions, you will have thought more deeply about the nature of your subject, and so should be more ready to write about it.

To Select the Program

Choose option 1, Find and Organize a Subject, from the *Writer's Helper* menu.

Choose option 2, Explore a Subject, from the Find and Organize Menu.

Choose option 3, *Three Ways of Seeing*, from the Explore a Subject menu.

To Use the Program

The program begins by asking you to name your subject. Next, you must say whether your subject is a person, place, thing, event, idea or activity. The program then begins to ask questions; just answer each question as it appears. Brackets on the screen show you how much room you have for your answers.

Trees

Purpose

This program is intended to help you organize your ideas about a subject. It helps you list ideas, group them, and then it prints an outline of the ideas in the shape of a tree. Your subject is the root, the group labels are the major branches, and the other ideas are twigs at the end of each of the branches. You can then print the tree and refer to it as an outline of your major points and what ideas belong in the same paragraph.

To Select the Program

Choose option 1, Find and Organize a Subject, from the *Writer's Helper* menu.

Choose option 3, Organize Information, from the Find and Organize Menu.

Choose option 1, *Trees*, from the Organize Information menu.

To Use the Program

When you begin the program, it asks you for the name of your subject and for eight to fifteen words or phrases somehow related to your subject. The items need not be in any particular order and can be closely or loosely related to your subject.

Once you have finished typing your items, the program prints your list and asks you to name a category which covers several of the items in the list. You name the category and then tell how many and which of the items fit that category. You can place each item in more than one category.

When you have categorized the items in your list, the program creates a tree for you.

Debating an Issue

Purpose

People have opinions about all kinds of things, but to convince others of your opinion, you need to collect evidence to support it. You also need to consider objections to your opinion. This program helps you organize this information into an outline for an essay.

To Select the Program

Choose option 1, Find and Organize a Subject, from the *Writer's Helper* menu.

Choose option 3, Organize Information, from the Find and Organize Menu.

Choose option 2, *Debating an Issue*, from the Organize Information menu.

To Use the Program

The program first asks you to state your opinion and then to type sentences supporting or opposing your opinion. Brackets on the screen show you how much room you have for each sentence. You can list as many or as few reasons for support and for opposition as you like.

When you have finished typing your sentences, the program lists your answers and asks you which sentences are most important. It then arranges these sentences in that order in an outline.

Comparing and Contrasting

Purpose

One of the best ways to explain a subject to someone is to compare it to another subject. Then you can tell how it is like that subject and how it is different. This program helps you list ways two subjects are similar and different, and then create an outline of a comparison essay for you.

To Select the Program

Choose option 1, Find and Organize a Subject, from the *Writer's Helper* menu.

Choose option 3, Organize Information, from the Find and Organize Menu.

Choose option 3, *Comparing and Contrasting,* from the Organize Information menu.

To Use the Program

The program begins by asking you to name your subject and a second subject which is similar. The program then asks you to write sentences showing how the two subjects are similar and how they are different. Brackets on the screen show you how much room you have for each sentence. You may write as many sentences as you like.

When you are done writing sentences, the program lists all the sentences you have typed and asks which are the most important similarities and the most important differences. It then creates an outline of these sentences.

Five-Paragraph Theme

Purpose

One of the standard ways of writing a short theme is to write an introduction paragraph, three main paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph. This type of theme is known as the five-paragraph theme. This program writes a rough draft of a five-paragraph theme for you. It asks you a series of questions about your subject and then uses your answers to create an introduction, three main paragraphs, and a conclusion. The theme the program creates will not be perfect, but it should give you a rough draft which you can complete in a word processor.

To Select the Program

Choose option 1, Find and Organize a Subject, from the *Writer's Helper* menu.

Choose option 3, Organize Information, from the Find and Organize Menu.

Choose option 4, *Five-Paragraph Theme*, from the Organize Information menu.

To Use the Program

The program begins by asking you to name your subject. Then it asks you to identify your purpose in writing. Next, you must name your audience and tell what kind of opinions your audience has about your subject.

Now you must begin writing sentences which support your ideas. Brackets on the screen show you how much room you have for each sentence. The program asks you to write a total of fifteen sentences in answer to various questions it asks.

When you have answered all the questions, the program creates a five-paragraph theme and displays it on the screen for you.

Develop a Single Paragraph

Purpose

This program shows you one way to write a single paragraph with an initial assertion, followed by several sentences of support or explanation. The paragraph can be either descriptive or argumentative. You can use the program if you are only writing a paragraph, or if you are writing a theme and are having trouble writing one particular paragraph.

To Select the Program

Choose option 1, Find and Organize a Subject, from the *Writer's Helper* menu.

Choose option 4, *Develop a Single Paragraph*, from the Find and Organize Menu.

To Use the Program

When you use the program, it first asks if you want to develop a descriptive or argumentative paragraph.

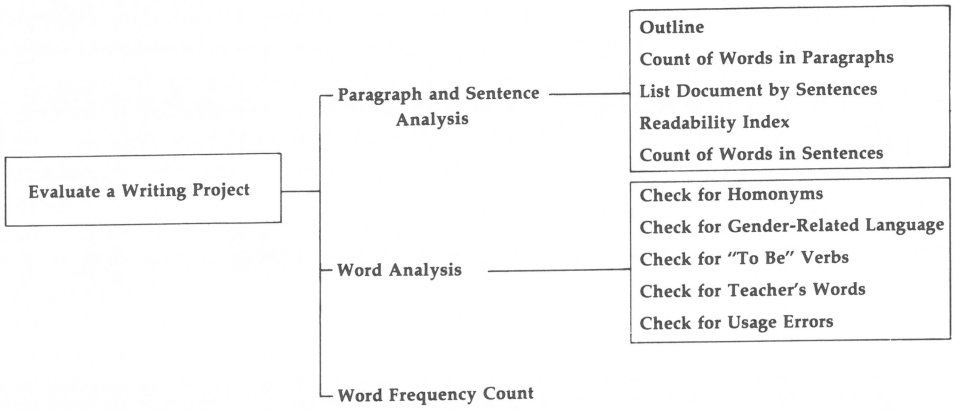
Descriptive Paragraph

If you choose to write a descriptive paragraph, the program begins by giving you an example of a descriptive paragraph. It then asks you to write a paragraph similar to the example by typing a one-sentence opinion followed by four sentences of support. Brackets on the screen show you how much room you have for each sentence. When are finished writing, the program combines your sentences into a paragraph.

Argumentative Paragraph

This program shows you three ways to write a paragraph of argumentation. The program begins by asking if you want to write a paragraph using examples, statistics, or details. Once you have chosen, the program demonstrates one way to write a paragraph of that type. It then asks you to write a one-sentence opinion and four sentences of support. Brackets on the screen show you how much room you have for each sentence. When you are done writing all five sentences, the program forms your sentences into a paragraph.

Evaluate a Writing Project



This section of *Writer's Helper* includes eleven programs to help you evaluate your writing project. The purpose of the programs is to give you information about an essay or story you have written. These programs can only tell you some things about your writing, such as the grade level of your writing or whether you are using many passive verbs. The programs can't tell you if your writing is grammatically correct, or if your writing is interesting or persuasive. You and your teacher must evaluate your writing for these things.

To Use the Programs

To use the evaluation programs, you must have written an essay or story with a word processor, or with one of the *Writer's Helper* prewriting programs. If you are using Bank Street Writer, *do not* save your document with a password. *Writer's Helper* cannot read a Bank Street document that has been assigned a password.

Some of the programs require that each paragraph in your document begin with a five-space indentation, so use this convention when typing your document in the word processor. You should also not include any of the commands typically used in word processors to format your document (for things like centering and indenting). Because *Writer's Helper* cannot evaluate these special codes, it removes them. Wait until you have completed reviewing and revising your document with *Writer's Helper* before formatting it for printing.

Once you select a program from the menu, it asks you for the name of the document you want to analyze. The size of the document is important. *Writer's Helper* can analyze documents of approximately 2,300 words or 14 double-spaced, typed pages. If your document is too large, *Writer's Helper* reads as much as it can and tells you that not all the document would fit. It then lets you analyze the part that was read. You should use your word

processor to divide the document into smaller parts and analyze each part. Of course, the larger the document, the longer *Writer's Helper* takes to analyze it. This is another good reason to break your document into small parts.

Before beginning each analysis, the program asks if you want to print a copy of the results. If you have a printer attached to your computer, this is a good idea so you will have something to refer to while revising your document.

To Select the Programs

Choose option 2, **Evaluate a Writing Project,** from the Writer's Helper menu.

The Evaluate a Writing Project Menu divides the programs into three levels.

```
                Evaluate a Writing Project

        These programs will give you information
about your document so you can begin the revision
process. The programs can only tell you some things
about your writing, such as the grade level of your
writing or whether you are using many passive
verbs. The programs can't tell you if your writing is
grammatically correct, or if it is interesting or
persuasive.

        Choose the kind of analysis you want from
the following list:

            1) Paragraph/Sentence Analysis

            2) Word Analysis

            3) Word Frequency Count

            4) Return to the Writer's Helper Menu

            5) End this Session

Type the number of your choice and press RETURN.
```

Figure 5. Evaluate a Writing Project Menu.

Choose option 1, **Paragraph and Sentence Analysis,** for these programs:

Outline Document
Count of Words in Paragraphs
List Document by Sentences
Readability Level
Count of Words in Sentences

Choose option 2, **Word Analysis,** for these programs:

Check for Homonyms
Check for Gender-Related Language
Check for Teacher's Words
Check for "To Be" Verbs
Check for Usage Errors

Choose option 3, **Word Frequency Count,** for this program.

Each of these programs is described below.

Paragraph and Sentence Analysis

Outline Document

This program creates an outline of your essay by printing the first line of each paragraph in the document. It assumes that you started each paragraph with a standard five-space indentation. It prints the first lines for you and then asks if the lines contain transitions and show logical sequencing. Sometimes, just by looking at the first lines of paragraphs, you can see that the paragraphs wander from your central point, or jump from one idea to another. If you can't see a logical development in these lines, you should rewrite the first lines of your paragraphs, or perhaps change the order of the paragraphs.

Count of Words in Paragraphs

This program graphs the length of each paragraph by printing one star for every five words. It also tells you the total number of words in each paragraph, the total number of words in your theme, and the average length of your paragraphs. If any of the paragraphs are exceptionally short or long, the program warns you that you should check your paragraphs for this problem. You may want to use the *Develop a Single Paragraph* program in the first section of *Writer's Helper* to rework the paragraph.

List Document by Sentences

This program prints each sentence in your document, one at a time, so you can concentrate on the flow and logical transition of each sentence. This is also a good time to check each sentence for grammar errors.

Readability Level

This program computes the reading level of your essay. It is based on a formula which counts the number of long words and long sentences you use. The program asks you to specify the grade level of your readers. If the readability level of your essay is too high or too low for your readers, the program tells you some things you can do to revise your document.

Count of Words in Sentences

This program graphs the length of each of your sentences by printing one star for every word. It also computes the length of each sentence and the average length of your sentences. The program can't tell you if your sentences are grammatically correct, but if you find many very short sentences, or sentences which are very long, you should check to make sure the sentences don't contain grammar errors. You should also check to see if all your sentences are the same length. If they are, it is usually a sign that you aren't using variety in your writing style—a trait which may put your readers to sleep.

Word Analysis

Each of these programs checks your document for certain types of word problems: homonym confusions, gender-biased words, passive verbs, and word usage errors. When it finds one of the words, it gives an example of how to use the word correctly. The program then asks if you want to mark the word. If you need to change or correct the word, mark it so that, at the end of the program, you can save the marked document and then use your word processor to find and replace it.

For these programs, you can evaluate the same document for several types of words in the same session. *Writer's Helper* saves the marked words from each evaluation and adds new ones from each type of evaluation. The danger is that you may use too many evaluations in one session. Then, when you return to your word processor to correct the words, you may forget why you wanted to change each word. To be safe, only evaluate for two or three types of words in any one session.

Check for Homonyms

Homonyms are words which sound the same but are spelled differently. Examples are "there," "their", and "they're." This program searches your writing for homonyms which are often confused. If it finds one, it highlights the word and prints a message which shows how to use the homonyms correctly. You must decide if you have spelled the word correctly.

Check for Gender-Related Language

This program checks your document for words and phrases which may be gender biased. The program won't find all cases of gender-biased language, but it will alert you to this problem so that you can think about it as you are reviewing and revising.

Check for Teacher's Words

This program looks for a list of words created by your teacher. If it finds any of the words, it prints a message your teacher has prepared for you.

You can also use the program yourself to create your own list of troublesome words. Ask your teacher how to enter words for this program.

Check for To Be Verbs

One common problem in writing is overuse of passive verbs. Passive verbs are "to be" verbs: is, was, are, were, am, been. These verbs often hide action and responsibility. For example, the sentence "Taxes were raised" doesn't say who raised the taxes, it just says they went up. If this sentence had been, "Congress raised taxes," it would be clear who was responsible for increasing taxes. Writers also use passive verbs when they want to hide the fact that they don't fully understanding something.

This program locates all forms of the verb "to be" in your document. Sometimes, these verbs will be linking verbs, others will be passive verbs. If your document includes many of these verbs, you should replace them with action verbs to add life and clarity to your writing.

Check for Usage Errors

This program checks the document for common errors with certain words. If the program finds one of the words, it highlights the word and gives an example of to use it correctly. You must decide if you have used the word or phrase correctly.

Word Frequency Count

This program prints each word in your document in alphabetical order with the number of times it appears. At the end, it also summarizes the total number of words in the document and the total number of unique words.

When the program begins, it asks if you want to exclude any words from the count. For example, you might want to omit words like "a," "an," and "the." You may exclude up to 20 words.

Appendix A

Homonyms

AID
AIDE
aid = help or assistance. Example: He came to my aid.
aide = assistant, helper. Example: She was the colonel's aide.

ALTAR
ALTER
altar = a place where religious ceremonies are performed. Example: He placed the flowers on the altar.
alter = to change. Example: She will alter the schedule.

ANT
AUNT
ant = insect. Example: Only one ant invaded our picnic.
aunt = your mother's or father's sister. Example: My aunt visited our family recently.

ARC
ARK
arc = curve. Example: The lightening made an arc of white in the sky.
ark = boat. Example: The animals entered the ark two by two.

ASCENT
ASSENT
ascent = move upward. Example: Their ascent to the top of the mountain took many weeks.
assent = to agree. Example: He could not assent to our proposal.

BEAR
BARE
bear = suffer, endure. Example: I can't bear the pain.
bare = uncovered, empty. Example: The cupboard was bare.

BOARD
BORED
board = piece of wood. Example: He nailed down the board.
bored = weary, tired. Example: They were bored with the game.

CAPITAL
CAPITOL
capital = official seat of government. Example: Washington, D.C., is the capital of the United States.
capitol = the building in which Congress meets. Example: We visited the Capitol in Washington, D.C., last summer.

CEREAL
SERIAL
cereal = grain. Example: The feed mixture included cereal.
serial = arranged in a series. Example: The serial was published in three parts.

COARSE
COURSE
coarse = rough, crude. Example: The table had a coarse finish.
course = the path over which something moves. Example: The hunter followed an irregular course through the woods.

COLONEL
KERNEL
colonel = military officer. Example: The colonel gave new commands.
kernel = a seed. Example: A kernel of corn was lodged between the boards.

COMPLEMENT
COMPLIMENT
complement = something that completes, makes perfect. Example: Sue's blouse complements the rest of her outfit.
compliment = praise. Example: Did you compliment Sue on her work?

CONFIDENT
CONFIDANT
confident = certain, sure of oneself. Example: He is confident he will win.
confidant = trusted friend. Example: Bill is my confidant.

CORE
CORPS
core = central part. Example: Main Street is the core of our town.
corps = military subdivision. Example: The Marine Corps moved to a new base.

COUNCIL
COUNSEL
council = assembly, club, society. Example: The council met each month to discuss new ideas.
counsel = advise. Example: My parents will counsel me on choosing a college.

DESCENT
DISSENT
descent = move downward. Example: His descent down the mountain was full of danger.
dissent = disagree. Example: Representative Jones gave a dissenting opinion.

DESERT
DESSERT
desert = leave without planning to return. Example: He was going to desert the army.
dessert = sweets served following a meal. Example: We had apple pie for dessert.

ELICIT
ILLICIT
elicit = to bring out. Example: He tried to elicit answers from everyone in class.
illicit = unlawful. Example: She used illicit means to gain her objective.

EMINENT
IMMINENT
eminent = prominent, famous. Example: Dr. Clark is an eminent psychologist.
imminent = ready to take place. Example: The baby's birth is imminent.

HEAR
HERE
here = at this place. Example: Put the desk here.
hear = to sense sound. Example: Do you hear the bells?

ITS
IT'S
its = possessive meaning "belonging to it." Example: The dog lost its bone.
it's = contraction of "it is." Example: It's time to go home.

IMMIGRATE
EMIGRATE
emigrate = to leave a country to settle in another; to move out. Example: The pilgrims left England to emigrate to the New World.
immigrate = to come into a new country; to move in. Example: Most people immigrate to this country from Mexico.

LESSEN
LESSON
lessen = decrease. Example: His arguments did not lessen her interest.
lesson = exercise. Example: We have only one homework lesson for tonight.

PRINCIPAL
PRINCIPLE
principal = most important; chief executive of a school. Example: Going to college is his principal goal. Mr. Jones is the principal of our high school.
principle = a rule of conduct. Example: She is a woman of high principles.

PROFIT
PROPHET
profit = gain, net income. Example: The company made a large profit last year.
prophet = predictor. Example: He is a prophet of doom.

SCENT
SENT
CENT
scent = smell, odor. Example: There's a fresh scent in the air today.
sent = past form of "to send." Example: He sent her fresh flowers.
cent = penny. Example: Your change is one cent.

SITE
SIGHT
CITE
site = position, location. Example: This is the site for our new home.
sight = the ability to see. Example: He lost his sight several years ago.
cite = quote a book or person. Example: He planned to cite several books in his report.

STATIONARY
STATIONERY
stationary = fixed; not moving. Example: He remained stationary, hoping the bear would not see him.
stationery = writing paper. Example: Her stationery is scented with roses.

THERE
THEY'RE
THEIR
there = at that place. Example: Put the book there.
they're = contraction of "they are." Example: They're coming home.
their = possessive form of "they." Example: Their car is in the shop.

TO
TOO
TWO
to = preposition to express motion toward. Example: He ran to meet her.
too = also; to an extreme. Example: Carl passed the test too. It's too hot!
two = the number following one. Example: He owns two cars.

VAIN
VEIN
VANE
vain = overly proud. Example: Sally is so vain she spends all her time in front of the mirror.
vein = tubes that carry blood in the body. Example: His veins carry ice instead of blood.
vane = device with blades that turns with the wind. Example: The weather vane blew wildly in the wind.

WHOSE
WHO'S
whose = possessive of "who." Example: Whose jacket is that?
who's = contraction of "who is." Example: Who's coming to dinner?

YOUR
YOU'RE
your = possessive of "you." Example: Your coat is in the closet.
you're = contraction of "you are." Example: You're going to miss the bus.

Appendix B

Gender-Related Language

BEAUTICIAN
Substitute "cosmetologist" or "hair stylist."

BUSINESSMAN
BUSINESSMEN
BUSINESSWOMAN
BUSINESSWOMEN
Substitute "business person."

CHAIRMAN
CHAIRMEN
Substitute "chair" or "head."

COED
Substitute "student."

CONGRESSMAN
CONGRESSMEN
CONGRESSWOMAN
CONGRESSWOMEN
Substitute "representative."

DAME
CHICK
BROAD
Demeaning slang. Replace with "woman."

DELIVERYMAN
DELIVERYMEN
Substitute "delivery person."

FATHERLAND
MOTHERLAND
Check your sentence for bias.

FIREMAN
FIREMEN
Substitute "fire fighter."

FRESHMAN
FRESHMEN
Substitute "first-year student."

HE
SHE
Check your sentence for bias.

HER
HIM
HIS
Check your sentence for bias.

MAID
MAIDS
CLEANING LADY
CLEANING LADIES
Substitute "housekeepers."

MAILMAN
POSTMAN
Substitute "mail carrier."

MAN
MEN
WOMAN
WOMEN
Check your sentence for bias.

MANKIND
Substitute "humanity."

MANLY
WOMANLY
Check your sentence for bias.

MAN-MADE
Substitute "artificial."

MILKMAN
MILKMEN
Substitute "milk carrier."

NEWSMAN
NEWSMEN
Substitute "reporter."

POLICEMAN
POLICEMEN
POLICEWOMAN
POLICEWOMEN
Substitute "police officer."

SEAMAN
SEAMEN
Substitute "sailor."

STEWARDESS
STEWARDESSES
Substitute "flight attendant."

TO A MAN
Substitute "everyone."

WEATHERMAN
WEATHERMEN
Substitute "meterologist" or "weather reporter."

Appendix C

Usage Errors

ACCEPT
EXCEPT
accept = to receive. Example: Did you accept the invitation?
except = other than. Example: Everyone except Tom came.

ADVICE
ADVISE
advice = recommendation. Example: She gave me sound advice.
advise = to counsel. Example: Did she advise you to stay home?

AFFECT
EFFECT
affect = to influence. Example: Many things affect our economy.
effect = result. Example: The effect of her decision was chaos.

ALL
ALL OF
all of = Use with items. Example: All of the players were present.
all = Use when there are no items to be counted. Example: She was a teacher all her life.

ALONG THE LINES OF
Wordy; simplify the sentence.

ALOT
ERROR: Should be two words "a lot."

ALREADY
ALL READY
already = before the time specified. Example: The gym was already full by the time I arrived.
all ready = prepared. Example: The team was all ready for the game.

ALRIGHT
ERROR: Should be two words "all right."

ALTOGTHER
ALL TOGETHER
altogether = entirely. Example: His answer was altogether wrong.
all together = in a group. Example: We were all together for the party.

AMONG
BETWEEN
among = implies more than two. Example: There was disagreement among the Senators.
between = implies only two. Example: What is the difference between spring and summer?

AMOUNT
NUMBER
amount = things in bulk or mass. Example: The English drink a large amount of tea.
number = things that are countable. Example: A number of names were added to the list.

ANYMORE
ERROR: Should be two words "any more."

BASICALLY
Overworked; can often be deleted.

BEING AS
Wordy; substitute "because" or "since."

BEING THAT
Wordy; substitute "because" or "since."

BESIDE
BESIDES
beside = at the side of. Example: The table is beside the bed.
besides = in addition to. Example: Besides Jim and John, Joe came too.

BETWEEN YOU AND I
ERROR: Should be "between you and me."

BORED OF
ERROR: "bored" should be followed by "with" or "by."

BUNCH
CROWD
bunch = a collection of things. Example: She carried a bunch of flowers.
crowd = a collection of people or animals. Example: A crowd of students gathered.

CAN NOT
ERROR: Should be one word "cannot."

COUPLE
Always requires "of" in phrases like: a couple of questions.

CRITERIA
CRITERION
criteria = plural.
criterion = singular.

DATA
DATUM
data = plural.
datum = singular.

DEPEND
Requires "on" or "upon," as in: It depends on your reasons.

DESPITE THE FACT THAT
Wordy; substitute "although" or "though."

DOUBTLESSLY
ERROR: Should be "doubtless."

DUE TO THE FACT THAT
Wordy; substitute "because" or "since."

E.G.
e.g. = for example. Use the abbreviation only in footnotes or parenthetical phrases. In the body of the text, spell out.

ESSENTIALLY
Overworked; can often be deleted.

ETC.
ET AL.
etc. = and other things.
et al. = and other people

FARTHER
FURTHER
farther = to express geographic distance. Example: Which is farther, Jupiter or Mars?
further = to express additional time, degree, or quantity. Example: Further arguments will only weaken your case.

FEWER
LESS
fewer = refers to number. Example: Jim has fewer books than I do.
less = refers to value, degree, or amount. Example: Her job is less important than Jim's.

FOR THE SIMPLE REASON THAT
Wordy; substitute "because" or "since."

I.E.
i.e. = that is; the equivalent of the preceding term. Use the abbreviation only in footnotes or parenthetical phrases. In the body of the text, spell out.

IMPLY
INFER
imply = suggest without stating. Example: He implied you were leaving.
infer = reach a conclusion. Example: From his remarks, we inferred he was leaving.

IN A VERY REAL SENSE
Wordy; delete.

IN ALL PROBABILITY
Wordy; substitute "probably."

IN ALL LIKELIHOOD
Wordy; substitute "probably."

IN CASE
Try substituting "if." Reserve "in case" for "in the event": In case of fire, use this exit.

IN CONNECTION WITH
Vague and unnecessary; simplify the sentence.

IN EXCESS OF
Wordy; substitute "over" or "more than."

IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT
Wordy; substitute "although" or "though."

IN TERMS OF
Wordy; simplify the sentence.

IN THE AFFIRMATIVE
Wordy; substitute "yes."

IN THE EVENT THAT
Wordy; substitute "if."

IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF
Wordy; substitute "about" or "approximately."

IN THE NEGATIVE
Wordy; substitute "no."

IN THIS DAY AND AGE
Wordy; substitute "now."

IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT
Wordy; substitute "because" or "since."

MAY BE
MAYBE
may be = verb form. Example: He may be leaving home soon.
maybe = perhaps. Example: Maybe he will leave home soon.

ON THE BASIS OF
Overworked and often redundant. He preferred it on the basis of simplicity.
PREFER: He preferred its simplicity.

PREVIOUS TO
PRIOR TO
Wordy; substitute "before."

PROCEED
PRECEDE
proceed = to ahead. Example: You can proceed with your plans.
precede = to go before. Example: The bridesmaids precede the bride.

QUESTION OF WHETHER
QUESTION AS TO WHETHER
Wordy; simplify the sentence.

REASON IS BECAUSE
Redundant; substitute "reason is that."

SUPPOSE TO
ERROR: Should be "supposed to."

ULTIMATELY
Overworked; can often be deleted.

USAGE
UTILIZE
Often wordy and incorrect. Try substituting "use."

USE TO
ERROR: Should be "used to."